NEA Today
The Magazine o iation
OCTOBER 2000

Special Insert:
Bush and Gore on the Issues

Helping Kids at the ballot box

Why NEA member Sandi Ortiz Ishii turned to politics to help her students achieve.

See page 8

NEA Today

October 2000

Volume 19 • Number 2

THIS MONTH IN NEA Today

A special insert:

Al Gore and **George Bush** on the issues that matter most to kids and public schools.

COVER STORY

Bob Riha, Jr.

Helping Kids at the Ballot Box

page 8

California NEA member Sandi Ortiz Ishii believes this November's elections are crucial for public education, so she's out on the campaign trail where candidates like Lou Corea (left) are meeting and greeting local voters in Orange County.

Cover photo by Dave Gatley

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Two former NEA presidents are heading a campaign to reduce class size

NEA Today

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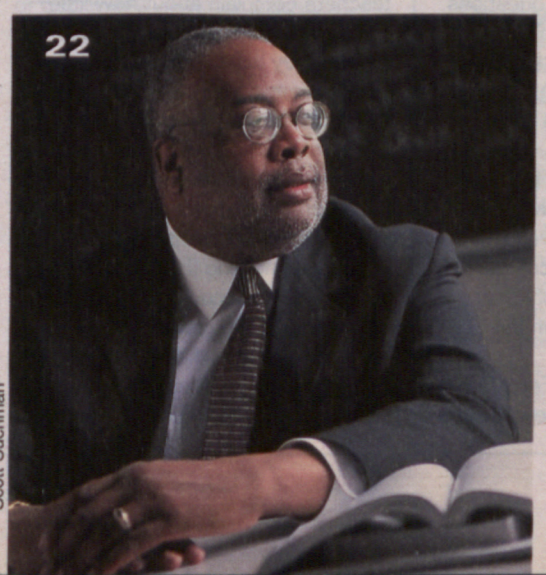

Scott Suchman

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Letters

MILLION MOM MARCH

The Million Mom March (News, September) had nothing to do with saving children and everything to do with re-electing politicians. Such hypocrisy is unbecoming of professional educators.

The "common sense" facts are that gun training empowers women, gun safety training saves children's lives, and armed citizens prevent 200,000 rapes and more than two million other crimes every year.

Laws permitting citizens to carry concealed guns drive crime rates down wherever they are passed. This is well documented. The truth is that since 1993, more children have been killed by automobile airbag deployment (99), than in school shootings (82), and there has never been a school shooting in a state that permitted law-abiding citizens to carry concealed weapons in schools.

Teachers need to examine critically the anti-gun bandwagon before they jump on it.

Scott Morris
Washougal, Washington

BOOM FOR WHOM?

Growing up in the lower economic class can be more to overcome than meets the eye (My Turn, May). It has taken me my entire life to do better, educate myself, and become successful.

What is success? No, I don't make a six-figure income. Success to me is feeling like I matter in this world and that I am a person treated with respect. Success is contributing to the community I live in.

I am white and female. I had to work very hard for what I have. I have a great appreciation for those who struggle, and sadness in my heart for all the problems that those in depressed communities must deal with.

The American media has captured the attention of our young. By portraying success, it turned our attention away from those who do not have. These messages have created the illusion that the only way to be successful is to obtain everything the upper class has.

This could lead a well-adjusted person to feel depressed and not thankful for being healthy enough to do a good day's work. Tamara Sober Giecek's program demonstrates how important this issue of economics and social class is to all of us.

Katherine Eriksen
Marshfield, Massachusetts

MULTICULTURALISM

In response to your cover story "Beyond Taco Tuesdays" (May): As a future educator, I have been taught not to single out a designated day or week for a different culture, but to include different cultures every day.

Young children may not realize there is such a thing as diversity, for all they see are others their age. One way to keep this "childlike innocence" would be to incorporate different cultures daily into the curriculum. That way, students may not realize the differences which society is so ready to point out.

Sheree Nelson
Moorhead, Minnesota

All this focus on multicultural education is bad for kids and it can only divide our country. American public schools should be about bringing in kids of all backgrounds and uniting them as Americans. Please, let's have more emphasis on teaching what unites us. Multiculturalism can only serve to divide us into competing groups.

Mark Cohen
Huntington Beach, California

HUNGRY CHILDREN

Such statements as "tens of millions participate in some federal child nutrition program" (When Kids Show Up Hungry, May) cause me to wonder: What are all the present programs accomplishing besides keeping bureaucrats employed? Aren't food stamps supposed to be used for feeding the children? Why do we need more programs?

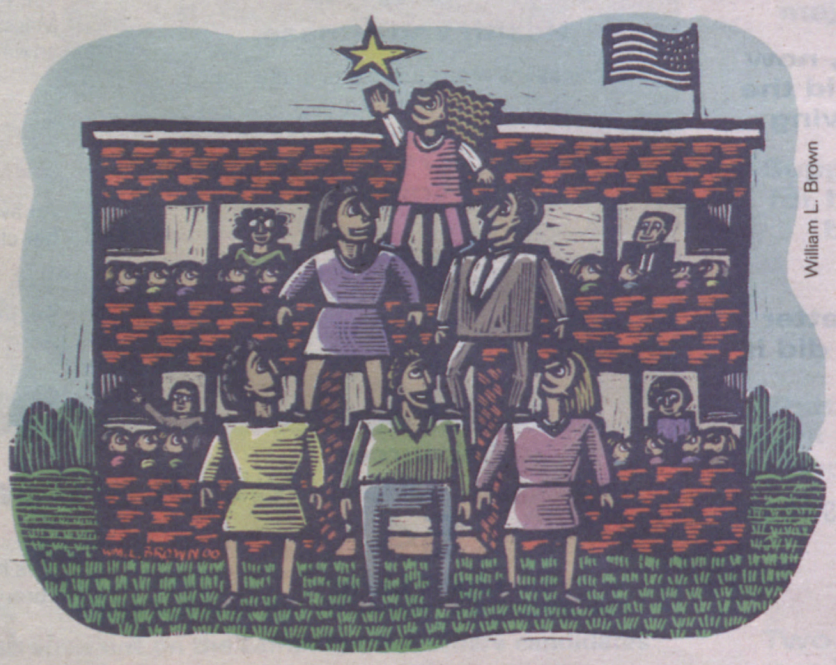
Raised during the Depression, I knew and felt the effects of poverty. But one factor made a difference: my mother. She always served us hot oatmeal and toast for breakfast.

Instead of creating new programs, why not teach those who are responsible for the alleged tens of millions of children to do such difficult tasks as boiling water? That might also show these children that someone cares about them.

Over thirty years ago, while teaching a unit on Native Americans, I discovered that our government spent a lot of money to look after these wards of the state. If this money had been given to the people, each reservation client would have received over $28,000 a year. (My salary at that time was about $7,500.) Of course, this did not happen as the Native Americans were the poorest of our people.

Think twice before launching new bureaucratic "solutions" to our problems.

James Hirn
Escanaba, Michigan


William L. Brown

HELPING HOMES

The inspiring results described in Getting Help from Home (September) demonstrate what can happen when people listen to, and hear each other. For too long, parents have been typecast in the roles of spectators, fundraisers, or scapegoats. We all seek better ways to answer the legitimate questions "What's being learned," "How's my child doing," and "How can I help?" Fortunately, technology has matured and permeated our society to a degree that sets the stage for what just may be the next revolution in learning.

That revolution will be about people and how they relate, rather than about content or computers.

As educators, our gifts are focused on helping people learn, so that they can make better choices in their lives. Our responsibility is to inform ourselves, so that we can involve ourselves in building relationships with the families and communities who touch our lives and who place with us their trust. A critical mass of homes enjoy even better computational power and connectivity than our schools. Let's seize this moment and use technology to bring down the walls that stand between schools, homes, students and success.

Ferdi Serim
Santa Fe, New Mexico

VOUCHERS

Tim McGee's letter (May) alleges that the nonpublic school competes with the public school. How can there be competition if his schools reject all the "reluctant" learners they cannot or will not educate?

Our Constitution forbids tax supported religions and their appendages. There are all sorts and conditions of religions, sects, cults, and even nonreligions. The taxpayer should not be forced to finance these "religious" schools.

Melvin Frank
Poland, Ohio

I was surprised at how much negativism I keep hearing concerning vouchers (and not just from Mr. Hosch, April letter). I am a public school teacher, and very much enjoy teaching in the school I am at. I graduated, however, from a "religious" high school.

I received a far better education there than I would have at one of the local public schools. My father, enlisted in the Army, never had extra money. I still do not understand why my parents had to pay school taxes for services they would not use.

The public education system varies. Some regions have schools that provide poor education. A little healthy competition would not hurt most public schools. It might actually do them some good.

Diana Hammermeister
The Dalles, Oregon

SALARIES

I am dismayed after reading the April salary squeeze article. Plenty of college graduates earn $30,000 or less, including myself, for a 12-month job. I am sick and tired of listening to teachers complain about how little they make when every time I turn around they have a day off for one reason or another.

My children maintain an A average but must tolerate teachers who refuse to explain problems and hand back homework in a timely manner.

All of us choose a profession while in college knowing the expected income. If they can no longer accept this, perhaps they should seek employment elsewhere.

Stephen Richardson
Lawson, Missouri

I am one of the large number of teachers who "moonlight" to stay afloat. This year I averaged 48 hours per week as a paramedic and 50-80 hours per week teaching, and made $33,000 (gross) for 1999. Pathetic.

I take papers along in the ambulance to grade between calls. I even bring the ambulance to the school after hours to tutor kids. No teacher should have to work that much simply to make ends meet. It seems that no matter what we do, union or not, teachers are worth nothing.

I met a wonderful teacher last year. The kids loved her, the parents loved her, and she was extremely successful in the classroom. She now delivers Coca-Cola products for nearly twice her teaching salary and is able to provide adequately for herself and her young daughter.

I became a paramedic so I could work at night to put myself through college. Now it looks like I'll have to go back to being a paramedic full-time so I can put myself through life.

Anka Keller
Tucson, Arizona

I am a first-year teacher. After making $25,000 annually working in marketing, I decided to return to school to earn my degree and do something personally fulfilling. After my hard work, I was appalled to find I would now be making less money than when I had NO degree!

I am wondering what the NEA is doing to increase pay. Aside from a few local instances cited in your articles, what is my union doing on a state or national level to help my colleagues and me?

Autumn Reiling
Wheatland, Iowa

(Editor's note: The fight for fair pay is a tough battle that NEA affiliates are waging all across America. Your local Association needs you to be involved.)

MASSACHUSETTS TESTS

I wonder if Massachusetts teachers know who is scoring the state tests called MCAS (News, April). A classified advertisement in the Maine *Sunday Telegram* (June 6, 1999) may help explain the score discrepancies between standardized tests and the MCAS:

"Summer Work 55 Positions Available. If you have Assoc. Degree or better and would be interested in scoring assessment tests we need you."

Intrigued, I called. The pay was less than $10 an hour for temp agency employees to score Massachusetts' Comprehensive Assessment. The tests were scored by noneducators without 4-year degrees.

This seems to support the myth that, "We are all experts on education since we all attended school."

Lois Kilby-Chesley
Freeport, Maine

CHILD SUICIDE

The article "Saving Kids from Suicide" (April) is disturbingly silent on the United States Department of Health and Human Services finding that gay youth are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than other young people.

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, reports it is homophobia that is killing these kids. The youths at greatest risk are the ones who are least likely to reveal their sexual orientation (www.glsen.org/pages/sections/library/reference/011.article).

The NEA has a moral obligation to counteract youth suicide by promoting a school atmosphere of dignity and respect for all students: gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and straight.

Janet Williams
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

DAUGHTERS TO WORK

I have seen the following problems with Take Your Daughters to Work Day (Resources, March):

- Boys who feel excluded and slighted due to their gender.
- Girls at school who feel excluded because other girls are absent.
- Parents who do not support the school in requiring their children to make up missed work.

It throws off lesson plans, lunch counts, grades, and what have you.

I am the mother of two daughters who see their parents juggle career dedication with family values. They know exactly what their parents (both teachers) do. If Take Your Daughters to Work Day were held in the summer, my daughters could see what their aunts in business careers are doing, and a summer date would not be so conspicuous to my son and others of the male gender, as well as daughters who cannot go to their parents' employment due to safety issues.

Take Your Daughters to Work Day is reverse discrimination and an insult to educational values.

As an Association, can't we nudge the Ms. Foundation to make a good idea better by moving the date?

Fran Williams
Sherman, Illinois

Let's Talk

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Letters are edited for length and clarity.

President's Viewpoint

BY BOB CHASE

What's At Stake?

A lot is up for grabs in Election 2000. We stand to make a crucial difference.

A lot is at stake in the upcoming elections: The White House. The Congress. The Supreme Court. But what's really at stake is the future of America's children. Personally, I wish every citizen could visit Paul Revere Elementary School before stepping into the voting booth on November 7th.

Located in Anaheim, California, Paul Revere Elementary School sits literally in the shadow of Disneyland. Children can look up from the school's playground and see the theme park's famous Matterhorn.

But inside the school, some 1,200 children have been crammed into a facility built to accommodate 700. Some first and second grade classes overlap in the same room. Recess has been eliminated in the early grades; gym class has been "combined" with a 20-minute lunch period. Over 60 percent of the students speak limited English or none at all. More than 80 percent live in poverty.

Paul Revere Elementary stands as a shameful metaphor for all the promises that have yet to be fulfilled for the children of this country—and for the issues that demand attention in this coming election.

Currently, our nation is experiencing the longest period of peace and prosperity in its history. In an era of overnight billionaires and budget surpluses, it is obscene that every child in America should not be able to receive a decent, public school education right in his or her neighborhood. Indeed, it is obscene that we would not work to bridge the gap between rich and poor, or reform schools in the poor districts so that they are on a par with the wealthiest.

"Individually, we are rarely counted among the powerful. But in our numbers, we are a force to be reckoned with."

Martin Luther King once said, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

Yet at a time when our nation is enjoying unprecedented levels of "comfort and convenience," the ultimate measure of presidential candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush is exactly *how* they plan to direct this prosperity.

Al Gore intends to invest in public education—to fund such reforms as smaller class sizes and universal preschool—while providing tax relief to working and middle-class families. Governor Bush would subsidize school vouchers and create massive tax cuts that disproportionately benefit the nation's wealthiest.

Gore plans to increase education funding by $115 billion, Bush by $13.4 billion. Gore says that standards and accountability must be coupled with "training and support" for students and teachers alike. Bush says that if schools don't show results, he'll "impose consequences for failure." Gore wants to invest in school infrastructure. Bush has said, "I don't believe the federal government should be building classrooms across the country."

Therefore, this November, we must neither cast our votes aside, nor cast them lightly. Right now, almost one out of every 100 Americans is a member of the NEA. Individually, we are rarely counted among the powerful. But in our numbers we are a force to be reckoned with—provided that we vote.

At the voting booth, we must insist that the next President champion America's children, public schools, and the people who work in them. We must insist that resources go where they're needed most—not funneled cynically to the wealthiest. We must insist, in short, that no child be relegated to a school—or a life—that exists only in the shadows of America's best dreams.

Comments? E-mail Bob Chase at BobChase@nea.org.

Mrs. Jones, may we listen to an injection-molded polycarbonate *pleeeese.*

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Harvesting Success for Migrant Students

Growing up as a migrant laborer gave this Texas elementary teacher insight into the influence educators have on their students' futures.

BY ROSA MARIA RODRIGUEZ

First days of school always used to intimidate me growing up, because I knew the teacher would make us write about our summer vacation.

What summer vacation? Getting up at 5 a.m. to help my mother make tortillas. Working the fields 10 hours a day. This is summer vacation for many migrant students.

I was in third grade the first time my family took me north from Weslaco, Texas. The pattern was the same for years.

Starting in March, I would plant, prune, tie tomatoes, and complete my school year in Virginia. In June, we would migrate to Michigan, where I would pick cucumbers, tomatoes, strawberries, and eventually start school again.

In October, I would return to Weslaco for the winter term, my only chance to focus only on my studies.

I received an education in the fields. At an early age, I became the family translator. I learned how to add up the money I earned each day and how many buckets of tomatoes we picked.

I also learned about injustice—picking tomatoes while crop dusters flew over spreading pesticide, wondering helplessly why I got 25 cents for a bucket of tomatoes filled above the rim, the same tomatoes that sold at the grocery store at five for a dollar.

Injustices like these helped me realize the importance of education. One early morning, after the first freeze, I shivered as I began to pick the first tomato. I vividly remember crying, wishing I was home with a warm blanket.

"I will go to college," I decided on the spot, "and get a better life."

College was a luxury my parents could not possibly afford, but a school counselor convinced me I had many opportunities.

My senior year, my parents left me behind to graduate with my class. I did, without my family cheering for me.

I remember taking days to open a package from St. Edward's University, for fear of finding a rejection inside. Instead, there was a scholarship offer for the first year.

Kevin Virobik-Adams

Second grade teacher Rosa Rodriguez is aware that her students come from many different family situations, and she factors that into her teaching.

I now teach second grade in an air-conditioned room, away from the sun and the torturous field work I endured. I look back and wonder why I became a success while some of my friends still toil for minimum wage.

The difference? I had compassionate, caring teachers who saw my potential and kept encouraging me—an English teacher who tutored me before school, a counselor who helped me find a scholarship.

Teachers play such an important role in our students' lives. We influence their love or hate for school.

We need to understand our students. Many come from impoverished homes. Some must work to help the family make ends meet. They see work as their first priority.

As a teacher, I understand the concern about getting a new student. Have they learned what I've already taught? How far behind are they? Can they write? Several of my migrant friends left school for that exact reason. Falling behind every year, some students are waiting for their 16th birthday to quit.

We need to reach out and motivate these students to continue education.

That motivation might be as easy as allowing a student extra time to turn in assignments or providing some one-on-one tutoring before school and during lunch.

Many migrant parents have little or no education. They don't understand the support a teacher needs from home. Many don't speak English.

Some take their children out of school when harvest season starts in order to survive.

They feel forced to put the education of their children on the back burner. We can't afford to. ✔

Rosa Maria Rodriguez teaches at Hermelinda Rodriguez Elementary in Austin, Texas. She can be reached via E-mail at rrodrig3@austin.isd.tenet.edu.

No one would blame Buffalo school bus aide Mary Byrd if she decides not to return to work this fall.

On a warm spring day last May, the veteran bus aide was struck in the ankle by a stray bullet as she escorted the last of her charges off the bus.

"I didn't know what was going on," Byrd told *NEA Today*. "I heard parents yelling, 'They're shooting! They're shooting!' And then I just screamed for my children to get back up on the bus. Everything was happening so fast, I didn't know where I was shot. Then I just lost consciousness."

Bill Fischer
editor

Byrd, a bus aide for many years, had volunteered to travel with a bus that was missing an aide. It was not her normal route,but the bus was filled with kindergarten children and she thought they might need her. She was right.

As Byrd walked into the middle of the street to stop traffic for the children, a 17-year-old opened fire at another man down the street. Byrd was caught in the middle.

"I was standing down in the street and my children were getting off," Byrd said. "Whoever it was started shooting. I remember a child lying over this woman on the sidewalk. I didn't know if they were dead. And that is the last thing I remember."

Colleagues recall Byrd's first words at the hospital after regaining consciousness were, "Are the children okay?"

Byrd was standing only a foot away from the closest child. Luckily, none of the children was injured in the gunfire.

"I feel safe, because I have someone looking out for me. When you are on the job, you are not alone, no matter what the circumstances are," Byrd says. "We know that our jobs can be dangerous, but we are there for our children, because we love our children.

"Come next fall, I'll be back on the bus route."

Bill Fischer

How one NEA member in California is rousting up votes to safeguard her classroom

Helping Kids at the Ballot Box

NEA member Sandi Ortiz Ishii is working hard for the reelection of Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (center), because on Capitol Hill, Sanchez works for the kids.

Bob Riha, Jr.

California NEA member Sandi Ortiz Ishii tells her colleagues that politics isn't just a distant abstraction. "It affects you right in your life and your classroom," Ishii says.

She's living proof.

A teacher of gifted and talented students, and the daughter of a Mexican immigrant, Ishii has made the building of school programs that challenge Hispanic students her personal mission.

But Ishii knows full well that she'll never realize this mission by herself. Her work in Orange County's Garden Grove school district receives vital funding from federal Jacob K. Javits grants.

That's why Ishii was so appalled, back in the '90s, when her own member of Congress, ultra-conservative Robert Dornan, opposed funding for the Javits program, along with the entire federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In fact, Dornan had an education voting record, as tracked by NEA's legislative office, of zero.

So when a progressive challenger surfaced in 1996, a strong candidate named Loretta Sanchez, Sandi Ishii was ready to get politically involved—and she has stayed involved ever since.

This fall, all over the country, NEA members like Sandi Ishii are pounding the pavement and picking up phones to help kids and public schools. They're working to elect a new Congress that'll support quality public education for all students.

The current Congress has failed to provide that support. By relatively narrow margins, Congress has opposed Clinton Administration efforts to reduce class size, modernize school buildings, and aid public education on many other fronts.

Will the next Congress give public schools the support they need? That'll be determined this November, and Ishii, for one, is convinced that the political activism of individual NEA members like herself can indeed affect who gets elected.

In 1996, Ishii and her husband, Steve, put their volunteer efforts into both congressional and state legislative races. They phoned and leafleted. They button-holed friends. They called strangers.

"We gave an awful lot because we knew it could make a difference," says Ishii.

When the votes were counted, Loretta Sanchez had defeated Bob Dornan by the slimmest of margins. But their choice for the California Assembly, Lou Corea, suffered a narrow defeat.

In the next election, Sandi and Steve Ishii worked even harder. Their efforts helped bury Dornan's comeback bid in a Sanchez landslide—and also elected the pro-public education Corea.

This year, Sandi Ishii is taking nothing for granted. She's making the time to explain to neighbors why this election matters so much to children.

The connection between politics and kids is clear to Ishii. She knows, for example, what a big difference it makes to have small classes. She usually teaches classes of 30 students, but two years ago, she had just 20, thanks to a series of political decisions that cut class size in the primary grades.

"It was so wonderful, an incredible thing!" she recalls. "I got to know the kids and their learning needs so much quicker and better."

Vice President Gore's proposal to reduce class size—by hiring more teachers—is one of the federal initiatives whose fate will be decided on Election Day, says NEA's Director of Government Relations, Mary Elizabeth Teasley.

Vice President Gore has pledged to continue and expand that class size reduction drive if he's elected President, but he'll need the support of a pro-public education Congress.

The future of Sandi Ishii's favorite federal aid effort for local schools, the Javits program, also hinges on what happens this November.

The Javits program currently offers three-year grants of up to $215,000 that promote innovative teaching strategies and fund professional development for staff.

These grants, Ishii believes, can improve many children's lives, if the federal funding continues.

"That," she says, "is the big if." ✔

—Alain Jehlen

'Go Barb!'

In Vermont, an education support staffer fights for a friend of public schools

In rural northern Vermont, almost as far from Southern California as you can go in the United States, education support staffer Cheryl Currier is soldiering in a state legislative campaign that's no less heated than the congressional campaign battles that so actively involve NEA members like Sandi Ortiz Ishii.

Currier is organizing educator support for a crusading state legislator named Barbara Postman, whose son attended the high school where Currier coordinates volunteers, advises students, coaches cheerleaders, and carries out a host of other duties.

"Long before she was in politics," says Currier, "I knew Barbara as a parent volunteer."

So two years ago, when Postman decided to run for the state legislature and filled out her Vermont-NEA candidate questionnaire, Currier wasn't surprised that all Postman's answers were pro-public education.

The local Vermont-NEA political action committee, which Currier chairs, printed a brochure comparing the candidates' positions, then encouraged members to read the comparison—and vote. They did, helping Postman to victory, by just 154 votes, over an incumbent with a zero education voting record. Educators made the difference.

Ever since then, as a state legislator, Postman has made the difference for educators, especially low-paid support staff. She led the campaign for creating a Vermont "Livable Wage" at $10.37 an hour. Many support staffers—including Currier—currently make less than that.

"We have people in Vermont who are supporting children, working two, three, even four jobs," says Currier. "Watching her lead this fight, I thought, 'Go Barb!' People should be able to afford to live."

By documenting the real cost of living, Postman's Livable Wage campaign helped NEA locals in Vermont win significant raises. In one local community, base pay will go from $6.50 an hour to $9.50 in two years.

For the election this fall, Cheryl Currier is working harder than ever—because Postman has been targeted by conservative groups.

A defeat for Postman and other progressive legislators would threaten Vermont's landmark new school funding law, passed in 1997.

The idea behind the law: School funding should not depend on local property value. If a low-wealth district is willing to raise taxes to spend more on schools, the state adds what amounts to matching funds.

The result? A dollar added to the tax rate brings in the same money per pupil anywhere in Vermont. Property-poor districts are now approving budgets that never would have passed before. Roofs are being fixed, teachers hired, new books bought.

Cheryl Currier is defending the school funding law and the Livable Wage by helping Barbara Postman.

"I consider myself apolitical," Currier says. "I just want to support people who believe in public education, who want equity and quality for all children." ✔

Don Whipple

Barbara Postman (left) and Cheryl Currier go after votes one by one.

Don't Have Much Time...

... to help elect friends of education this November? In just 60 minutes, you could send a bunch of postcards to your friends and relatives, urging them to support your candidate.

In just 15 minutes, you could stop at a campaign headquarters and pick up a bumper sticker for your car.

In just one minute, you could remind someone to vote!

Q&A

At Home on the Campaign Trail

Throughout his Presidential campaign, Al Gore has been spending evenings at the homes of teachers, then going to their schools the next day. His first visit, earlier this year, was with NEA member Claudia Amboyer, a sixth grade language arts and social studies teacher at Middle School North in L'Anse Creuse, Michigan, and her husband, Don.

Q: How long in advance did you know Al Gore wanted to visit?

A: About 24 hours. The principal called around 9:30 the night before and said, "I have a favor to ask." I think he picked me because my name starts with an A, and he started at the top of the list. I wasn't active in politics at all.

He put a secret service agent on the phone who said, "I hope you're not in your pajamas, because I'll be there in half an hour."

Q: How did you prepare for the visit?

A: We vacuumed—that was about all we had time for. I picked up flowers for his bedroom, and found out what he liked for breakfast from a Secret Service person. We had had company recently, so we were a little prepared.

Q: What was it like when Gore arrived?

A: He handed his jacket to a Secret Service agent, said, "See you in the morning," and walked in. The Secret Service stayed outside in a Winnebago in the driveway.

It was a little strained at first, but he very quickly put us at ease. We talked about school and the importance of parent involvement. I showed him the Web site I use to communicate with parents.

He was kind of riveting. You felt he was totally interested in just you and what you were saying—completely sincere. I wish everybody could see that side of him—warm, friendly, interested.

It was very comfortable. But every once in a while I would think, "I can't believe the vice president is sitting in my family room talking to me."

We had decaf coffee and chocolate cake. We went to bed around 12:15.

Q: How was breakfast?

A: I got up at 5:30 and made bacon and scrambled eggs. He was up at 6. In the limo on the way to school, he talked by phone with Mrs. Gore. I didn't know who he was talking to until he handed me the phone. She said, "Thank you for taking good care of him." ✔

Al Gore's Plan for America's Schools

New and Modern Classrooms

For students to learn, schools must be well equipped and able to accommodate smaller class sizes. To make sure this happens, Al Gore has led the fight to pass the Administration's school modernization initiative. This proposal would generate $25 billion to help states and local school districts build more public schools.

Universal Pre-School

Al Gore believes we need to do more to help children get ready to learn. He has proposed investing billions of dollars from the federal budget surplus to fund universal pre-school for all children over the next 10 years. Because these pre-school years are critical to a child's later learning, Gore's program would make public pre-school available to every child beginning at age three.

More Teachers

Al Gore supports continuing America's program to add 100,000 new teachers. He understands that we need to focus on reducing class sizes in the earliest grades so our children are prepared to learn. But Gore wants to do more. As President, he will create the 21st Century Teacher Corps, providing $10,000 bonuses to attract qualified people to the teaching profession.

No Private School Vouchers... Ever

Gore strongly opposes using any federal money for private school vouchers. In fact, he has led the fight to use public funds exclusively for public schools. Gore believes we should fix failing schools and help them to achieve, not abandon them by cutting out essential funding.

Better Paid Teachers

Gore's proposal to provide federal support for higher teacher salaries is unprecedented. He understands that if we want to attract and retain the most talented teachers, we must pay them salaries that compete with other professions.

What's at stake for children and public education in this fall's elections?

How much difference, for kids and public schools, does it make who sits in Congress? Consider this: Earlier this year, the White House requested $43 billion for K-12. The House of Representatives voted to cut that to $17 billion. The difference for your state? See for yourself.

State	White House request (millions)	House proposal (millions)
Alabama	$668	$263
Alaska	170	160
Arizona	755	398
Arkansas	376	164
California	5,405	2,115
Colorado	407	184
Connecticut	393	179
Delaware	101	45
District of Columbia	173	48
Florida	2,317	871
Georgia	1,116	462
Hawaii	143	88
Idaho	134	71
Illinois	1,923	693
Indiana	649	292
Iowa	282	132
Kansas	318	155
Kentucky	638	257
Louisiana	986	330
Maine	165	78
Maryland	643	253
Massachusetts	784	346
Michigan	1,716	626
Minnesota	522	227
Mississippi	570	208
Missouri	724	306
Montana	168	96
Nebraska	193	99
Nevada	179	75
New Hampshire	107	54
New Jersey	1,015	444
New Mexico	377	222
New York	4,398	1,420
North Carolina	811	392
North Dakota	119	64
Ohio	1,590	583
Oklahoma	546	254
Oregon	388	177
Pennsylvania	1,737	645
Puerto Rico	1,090	392
Rhode Island	155	64
South Carolina	521	234
South Dakota	135	75
Tennessee	718	286
Texas	3,787	1,459
Utah	207	107
Vermont	94	41
Virginia	709	349
Washington	632	307
West Virginia	328	130
Wisconsin	743	281
Wyoming	114	50

Which candidate for Congress in your district is committed to supporting public schools? Check with your NEA local or state affiliate to see which candidate measures up.

Should candidates for Congress be required to pass competency tests?

SIMONE L. GOBEL ***teaches grades one, two, and three at Hansen Elementary School in Olympia, Washington. A six-year teaching veteran, she's active in the Olympia Education Association's work with the Washington state legislature.***

yes

The U.S. Constitution outlines the qualifications needed for someone to become a representative or a senator:

Clause 2: No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.

Clause 3: No Person shall be a Senator who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty Years, and been nine Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State for which he shall be chosen.

Wow! High standards indeed!

To become a teacher or a school bus driver, on the other hand, you have to meet requirements that go beyond simply living to a certain age or being a citizen for a number of years.

Shouldn't would-be members of Congress have to meet meaningful standards, too? I think so. So let's ask them to pass a congressional competency test.

As a teacher, I'm expected to prove my competency all the time —by legislators who have little or no knowledge of my profession. Many of these legislators make teachers the scapegoats for the ills that ail public education. Those ills, they tell us, have nothing to do with budget cuts and underfunding. They're the teachers' fault.

Their answer? Make those teachers prove their competence! That'll solve everything, or so we're told by lawmakers.

It's time to turn the tables. Let's see if those lawmakers can prove their own competence. I know just the sort of questions to ask:

If you had to make a decision on a bill dealing with education, what would you do?

a) Check with my mother, she gives great advice!

b) Roll the dice and support the bill if I roll a seven or higher.

c) Ask the person who treated me to the best dinner.

d) Consult with educators!

I'm sure you could come up with plenty of questions of your own. Who, after all, knows how to give better tests than we do?

In the end, of course, I know this is all just wishful thinking.

Realistically, can we force all candidates for Congress to take competency tests? No, of course not. But we can and we do, through our Association, interview and recommend those candidates who really know education.

We ask questions, during the interview process, about candidate views on everything from vouchers and school safety to compensation. We recommend candidates based on their answers. And then, after the elections, we try to make sure we keep those we recommend up-to-date on where we stand on issues that impact schools and students.

Do we want members of Congress who simply meet the constitutional requirements? No. We want members of Congress who see the need to fund education, who realize that teachers and support staff are part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Let's go out and complete our "competency testing" for congressional candidates—at the ballot box. ✔

CHARLES BARKLEY ***teaches mathematics at the Earle B. Wood Middle School in Rockville, Maryland. He has 28 years classroom experience, and he's also a first-term member of the Maryland state legislature.***

no

As a mathematics teacher, it's extremely important that I know my subject matter in order to be an effective teacher. A test to determine if I know mathematics seems appropriate. But my teaching and classroom management skills can't be measured with a paper-and-pencil test.

Similarly, as an elected state legislator, what competency test would you give me to determine if I'm able to serve as your representative? Would you test me just on how the government operates, or on my knowledge of a variety of subjects? Would current officeholders write the test? What would a passing score be?

I don't believe a competency test would give voters the best possible choices, not for the statehouse or for Congress.

The real competency test for me as an elected official is whether I can convince you that I could truly represent your views. Can I articulate your viewpoints and be willing to stand up for them even if the legislative leadership doesn't feel the same way?

I passed my competency test back in November 1998, when the voters in my district gave me enough votes to represent them in the Maryland House of Delegates.

I ran as a classroom teacher. Education was the top issue, and I ran as someone who had been in the classroom, on the firing line.

In my campaign, I argued that, as a teacher, I knew what it would take to solve the problems facing public education.

Our classes, I explained, are too large. Our buildings need to be modernized. We need more resources, like up-to-date textbooks for every child, and increased salaries for all education employees.

By introducing myself as a teacher, I was immediately able to gain the trust of the voters. They were willing to open up and share their views about education.

I also ran with the full support of the teachers in my local and the state. As an educator, I did not have the best-funded campaign, but I did have hundreds of other teachers and support staff who were always there when I needed their help. I would not have been elected without them.

I think I proved my competence to voters in my district.

But I have another reason for arguing "no" to competency tests for congressional candidates.

I believe representatives should represent a true cross-section of the voters. Legislative bodies should be made up of teachers, lawyers, farmers, bankers, real estate agents, nurses, doctors, accountants, social workers, homemakers, business people, retirees, and people from many other lines of work.

I do not believe there is a test out there that would cover all of the skills these people represent.

To me, the Maryland General Assembly is just one big classroom. The kids are a little bigger. Some are more outspoken than others. Some act like bullies. Some even cut class. This classroom definitely needs a lot more teachers.

Do I need a competency test to determine if I can represent you there? No, I just need the experience of facing the same problems you face. ✔

What's Your Opinion?

Should candidates for Congress be required to pass competency tests?
To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Is school fundraising worth the time and effort?
The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today:*
54% Yes **46% No**

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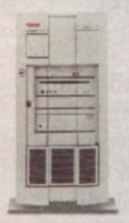

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Social Security: Let's Keep It Secure!

'Voucherizing' Social Security could rip the system apart

When author and investment firm executive William G. Shipman discussed the Social Security system last year with a group of Florida investors, he warned of a long-term funding shortfall. His solution, the *Naples Daily News* dutifully reported, was to give "individuals the freedom to invest all or part of their payroll taxes into individually owned, privately invested accounts. Otherwise the system as it exists today will go broke."

During this year's Presidential campaign, you'll hear more about this solution for a "failing" Social Security system. But before you invest in this idea, ask detailed questions about the *real* state of Social Security, who would benefit from handing the system, or part of it, to the financial industry, and who's pushing hardest to make that happen.

Who beside your banker or broker, that is.

"Lobbyists for Wall Street are trying to stay behind the scenes as they argue for Social Security privatization," the *Washington Post* has noted, "because they and their firms stand to profit by the changes they are promoting."

But you can expect to hear lots from folks like Shipman, co-chair of the Cato Project on Social Security Privatization, part of a network of ultraconservative think tanks busy promoting everything from social service privatization to school vouchers.

Yes, *vouchers.*

"Simply put, American schools are failing because they are organized according to a bureaucratic, monopolist model," declares Cato Briefing Paper #25. "The simplest way to create a system of educational choice is a voucher plan or a tax credit system."

The Cato Institute is now working "choice" into the Social Security "reform" debate.

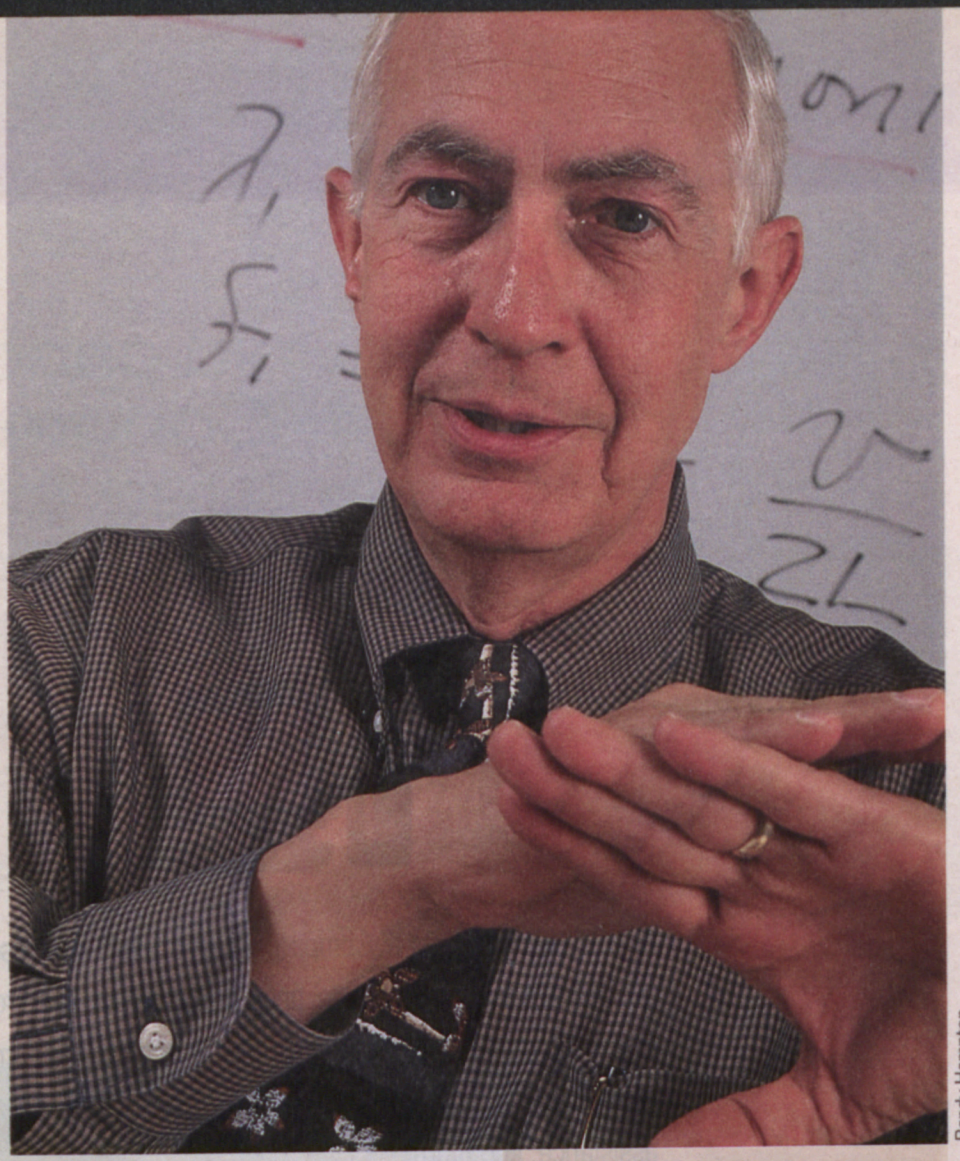
The Cato credo: Individual accounts funded by the Social Security payroll tax will "give workers ownership and control over their retirement funds, allowing them to accumulate wealth...and pass that wealth on to heirs."

Presidential candidate George W. Bush has adopted Cato's model as his own.

"One of the things I'm proposing," Bush told Fox News in May, "is to allow younger workers to invest a percentage of their payroll tax in private-sector investment vehicles, whether it be equities or bonds or T-bills, so that they own their own assets, an asset that they can pass from one generation to the next."

When you hear George Bush—or any candidate—advocate this approach to "saving" Social Security, ask these five probing questions:

1) Is the Social Security system really near collapse? Using



Randy Hampton

Pension fund trustee John Jensen: "Pose detailed questions to those who want to privatize Social Security."

Facts & Figures

Oops. Never Mind. . .

In a June 2000 poll conducted by *Newsweek*, 55 percent of respondents thought that investing their Social Security taxes in the stock market was a good idea. But that support plummeted to 17 percent when respondents were told this scheme might mean reduced benefits.

15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

■ **The goal:** Keep Social Security both social and secure.

■ **Things you can do:**

• Pose detailed questions to politicians who propose Social Security privatization. "Don't let them say, 'We don't have all the answers yet.' Details make a huge difference!" stresses NEA member John Jensen, a pension fund trustee in Nebraska. "And ask them, 'Why do you want to transfer all this financial risk to individuals?'"

• Be a smart consumer. Check out investment plans that *already* exist outside the Social Security system, including IRAs, 401(k) and 403(b) plans, and the 457 deferred compensation plan.

• If you work in one of the 13 states where public education employees aren't covered by Social Security, "support responsible Social Security reform proposals anyway," says NEA economist Stan Wisniewski. "Many others in your state are in it, including, perhaps, your own relatives. Like you, they deserve a decent retirement."

• Support Al Gore in November. He's proposing a "Retirement Savings Plus" program, similar to IRA and 401(k) plans, that would be funded out of the federal budget surplus—not through diverting Social Security revenues or changing the current Social Security system.

■ **Here's how to get started:** Learn more about Social Security by visiting the Social Security Administration's Web site at www.ssa.gov and using the "Social Security and You" teacher's kit. ✔

federal projections of a future funding shortfall, Governor Bush has warned that if "we don't think differently" about Social Security, "by the year 2037 the system is going to be broke."

But Bush overlooks the fact that official projections are "based on extremely pessimistic economic assumptions—that growth will average just 1.8 percent over the next 20 years, a lower rate than in any comparable period in U.S. history," notes economist Dean Baker.

"Social Security is projected to pay all promised benefits for the next three and one-half decades without any changes," stresses U.S. Representative Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio). "Indeed, Social Security's financial solidity is improving, even as Congress does nothing. We don't need the stock market to solve the system's projected shortfalls—we only need to strengthen the economy and raise wages."

Regardless of the state of the economy, the U.S. continues to operate Social Security on a "partial reserve" basis, with more money coming in than going out. Tax revenues not needed to pay benefits are invested daily in low-risk U.S. government bonds.

2) What will happen to Social Security if part of the payroll tax goes missing? No one denies that Social Security may need some fine-tuning to meet future obligations, and no one knows how economic factors—including higher real incomes, productivity growth, and immigration—will impact tax collection before then.

But diverting billions of dollars from the Social Security trust fund to private investment accounts "will shorten the time it takes the fund to run out of money," points out Nebraska NEA member John Jensen, a 21-year trustee of the 7,000-member Omaha School Employees Retirement System. "The solution to that problem could involve raising taxes and reducing benefits."

3) What are the other hidden costs of Social Security privatization? "For those who are retired or near retirement, there will be no changes at all to your Social Security," Governor Bush assured a group of retirees in May.

That's the humane thing to do, but switching to a system of personal accounts will impose "transition costs," according to a recent report from the nonprofit, nonpartisan Economic Policy Institute. Additional money will be needed to continue to pay traditional Social Security benefits for the "next 30 to 40 years," the EPI report points out.

"Creating a large number of small accounts is the costliest way of handling the nation's retirement savings," the report emphasizes. "Annual administrative fees on mutual fund accounts average 1.5 percent of the value of the account. Over the 40 years of someone's working life, a 1.5 percent annual fee reduces the total value of his or her account by 30 percent. By contrast, Social Security's administrative overhead is less than 1 percent."

4) What guarantees come with private Social Security accounts? A payroll tax-funded, worker-controlled retirement account is a "very popular idea with young people," concedes Jensen, who teaches science research at Omaha South High School.

"But privatization advocates forget to tell young workers that in return for a possibly higher rate of return they'll lose a large portion of their Social Security benefits," Jensen adds. "The greater the return on any private investment, the greater the risk. Who will protect these employees from investment fraud? And who will protect them if, through a bad investment or a depression, their private accounts go way down in value?"

5) Are we willing to scrap America's social insurance program? Social Security is a social insurance plan, not an "asset-building" plan.

"Any kind of insurance spreads risk across the whole population," says NEA staff economist Stan Wisniewski. "As a nation, we've made a philosophical decision to share the risks of old age and disability through Social Security, which, unlike a private account, is a guarantee of benefits for life."

"As a nation, we share the risks of old age and disability through Social Security, which is a guarantee of benefits for life."

—NEA economist Stan Wisniewski

Take a couple of payroll tax percentage points away from Social Security, and you start to dismantle the whole system—just like what private tuition vouchers do to public schools.

"Instead of looking out for those in need, you start looking at 'rates of return' and subtracting resources from the existing plan," Wisniewski stresses.

This isn't just an issue for senior citizens. Social Security can impact you at any point in your life, be it as a survivor, a retiree, or a person struck with a disability. In fact, young people whose parents both die can use Social Security benefits to get through college.

"My parents were kept out of abject poverty through Social Security, like millions of others," concludes John Jensen. "This basic benefit can't be jeopardized for the benefit of political careers." ✔

For more on Social Security, go to www.nea.org/socialsecurity.

Heroes & Zeroes

▲ **Last summer, Thulas Nxesi, leader of the South African Democratic Teachers Union, told NEA Representative Assembly delegates about SADTU's 20-year battle to build a diverse, national union while battling a state policy of racial separation.**

Nxesi said his union now represents almost two-thirds of South African teachers. But he stressed that there's much more work to do, including reorganizing racially divided school districts, improving substandard school buildings, and tackling top-down education "reform" that has "been drawn up by government officers to the exclusion of teachers and the union.

"Curriculum reform," Nxesi stressed, "can only be successful to the degree that teachers are involved." And he said something else any educator can relate to: "We must join hands to make sure public education is the right of *all* the world's children." *(For the full text of this speech, go to www.nea.org/nr/sp000704f.html)*

▼ **While South Africans are tearing down a segregated school system, Wall Street financier Ted Forstmann has spent $20 million of his own money on an ad campaign promoting the creation of a second, "competitive" education system for America. Forstmann, who has already donated millions for private "scholarships," says his media drive will educate parents about the "failures" of public schools and enlist their support for alternatives.**

All the more reason for you to educate the public about the ways educators spend money out of pocket for far more intelligent purchases—like classroom materials.

▲ **Substitute teachers can be certified career educators, students studying to become teachers, teacher retirees, or even regular teachers on break from year-round schools. But they all face the same problems—including poor wages, low respect, and no due process rights or health insurance.**

Last summer, members of the Substitute Teacher Caucus at the annual NEA Representative Assembly won passage of a new business item supporting the First National Conference for Substitute Teachers, held in July in Washington, D.C.

The RA action also highlights a national sub teacher Web site at www.netword.com/SubstituteTeacherAdvocacy.

"I'll be darned if I don't turn this into a recognized profession," pledges caucus Vice President Rick Harlan of Seattle. "I love this job. I get to meet more students in a week than any regular teacher does!"

"We stood united as a family—teachers, ESP, and retirees. Our opponents did not divide and conquer. We stood strong."
—Alabama fourth grade teacher Anita Gibson

Michael Profitt

Double Standard to New Standard

Alabama NEA members win historic legislation to boost teacher pay to the national average. The keys: unity and bipartisan political action.

In Alabama, there are standards and double standards. Teachers in the state are routinely held accountable for making sure students produce "national average" test scores. Yet experienced Alabama educators average only $36,500 a year, far below the $42,000 national teacher average, or even the $41,000 averaged by experienced educators in neighboring Georgia.

That double standard has a double edge in northeast Alabama's DeKalb County, where you either stay put and teach—for less—on your home turf or commute across the state line for a decent paycheck.

This tough choice disturbs DeKalb fourth grade teacher Anita Gibson, who teaches Alabama history and reading in rural Rainsville, just a short drive from the Peach State.

"Many teachers in this area go to Georgia or into other fields of employment that are more financially rewarding than teaching," laments this NEA activist. "We need their expertise to help prepare our students for careers in the latest technology."

"Teachers need more pay, or we'll lose more good people," agrees Virginia Bailer, a parent and school lunchroom manager in neighboring Jackson County, Alabama.

"For my money," says this ESP activist, "I want the best for children. Teachers can influence kids both inside and outside of school."

Bailer feels so strongly about teacher pay that last spring she collected letters from teacher colleagues at Section High School in Jackson, took a personal day, and rode to the state Capitol with Anita Gibson to lobby legislators for a bill to increase Alabama teacher salaries to the national average.

This precedent-setting legislation, jointly drafted and promoted by the Alabama Education Association and Democratic Governor Don Siegelman, wouldn't even have surfaced for a committee vote if teachers like Gibson and support staffers like Bailer had refused to join forces. The bill was fiercely opposed by powerful interests like the higher education establishment, school boards, and big-city newspapers.

But teachers, ESP, and retired Association members stuck together, refusing to buy the opponents' claim that more money for teachers meant less money for universities, other educators, and public school needs.

Their unity and lobbying skills eventually yielded legislation that will raise the salaries of Alabama teachers, counselors, and librarians to the national average in this decade.

The new pay hike law, signed by the governor in May, provides a 4 percent increase for teachers, ESP, and retirees in 2000-2001.

Then, starting in October 2001, just over 41 percent of the annual growth in the state's Education Trust Fund will be

THE BOTTOM LINE

KUDOS FOR SCHOOLS: Public approval of America's public schools is near its all-time high, reports the latest Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll. Over two-thirds of Americans, 70 percent, give an A or B to the school their oldest child attends. For more: www.pdkintl.org.

VOUCHERS: The latest Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll also reports growing opposition to taxpayer-financed vouchers for private school tuition. By a 75-22 percent margin, Americans would rather improve public schools than provide vouchers. For more: www.pdkintl.org.

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS: The share of college-bound high school students who have completed four years of English and three each of math, social sciences, and natural sciences now stands at a record 63.2 percent, according to ACT test data. For more: www.act.org/news/.

DIVERSITY: America's central cities are now nearly half minority, up from one-third minority in 1980. In the suburbs, meanwhile, minority populations have about doubled, from 13 percent to 23 percent. For more: www.hud.gov/pressrel/pr00-133.html.

dedicated to teacher raises until the national average is reached in 2006 or 2007.

Should annual trust fund growth fall below 3.5 percent, teacher raises will be subject to the normal give-and-take of lobbying. But, based on recent annual fund growth of 5 percent or better, Alabama teachers can expect annual raises of 1 percent to 5.5 percent, based on experience.

"Before this, trust fund growth was divided up without a real purpose," stresses AEA Executive Secretary Paul Hubbert. "This is the first time our state has committed itself to a long-term goal in any area of education."

Much of the credit for this historic legislation goes to AEA's 83,000 members. Throughout this lobbying battle, they used the power of:

■ **Teacher-ESP solidarity.** Many Alabama ESP used up personal days to participate in the teacher pay campaign, because they remembered the support certified staffers had given them in successful battles over issues like subcontracting and ESP professional development.

"We get teacher help any time we ask," says Virginia Bailer, an executive board member of AEA's ESP Organization. "And we know that whatever teachers get, ESP will eventually get, too."

Rosemary Wright, a special ed secretary in the Morgan County schools, says on-the-job connections help explain why she made three trips to the Capitol.

"I work with teachers every day," says Wright. "They're my friends, and I wanted them to get the national average."

One May morning—at 4 a.m.—this ESP local vice president squeezed into a carload of teachers bound for Montgomery, determined to occupy the Senate gallery until midnight—or however long it took to pass the teacher pay bill.

"When this bill finally passed, I thought it was good for teachers, for industry, and the state—a nice day for Alabama," says Wright. "We're all here for the same thing: the children."

■ **Lobbying in numbers.** At about the same time educators and community supporters back home were deluging legislators with phone calls and faxes, close to 900 grassroots AEA members visited the Capitol on three different lobby days to buttonhole lawmakers over salaries.

"We brought different members each time, to show that it wasn't just a few people fighting for this, and we lobbied in a very professional manner, without attacking or demanding," reports AEA activist Anita Gibson. "We stressed that this bill was important not as a raise, but for the children of Alabama, who deserve the best people we can put in the classroom."

■ **Bipartisan politics.** AEA worked closely with Republican Lieutenant Governor Steve Windom, who presides over the state Senate, to win support for the teacher pay bill in the Republican Caucus.

By exhibiting a willingness to compromise and helping opponents understand the issues, AEA lobbyists won some surprising converts—and a 34-0 "yes" vote on the very last day of the legislative session.

"Republican senators could have killed this bill on the last day," notes AEA Executive Secretary Hubbert, "but many realized that this Association works with them at election time. AEA contributes equally to both parties and we began this teacher pay campaign by visiting both party caucuses.

"We don't put all our eggs in one basket," Hubbert concludes. "We've worked with Democrats and Republicans alike to build a legislature that is strongly committed to public schools and opposed to vouchers." ✔

For more information, go to the Alabama Education Association Web site at www.alaedu.org.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Our classroom teachers have the most important responsibility in our state, and that is to train our children to the best of their ability. We must encourage and reward our teachers."

—Alabama Governor Don Siegelman (D)

"In private industry, we talk about the need for recruitment and retention of quality personnel. It's time we apply the same principle to our classrooms."

—Alabama Lieutenant Governor Steve Windom (R)

KUDOS TO...

. . . **Members of the Pinellas [Florida] Classroom Teachers Association** have ratified a 2000-2001 contract with raises ranging from 5.5 percent to 13.5 percent. The "average" increase is about 6.2 percent. Pay for two added training days brings the average to 7.7 percent, and $7 million in employer benefit contributions pushes the net close to 9 percent.

. . . **Trenton [New Jersey] Education Association members** have bargained a 6.1 percent raise in 2000-01, followed by a three-year contract with increases of 4.8 percent, 5.8 percent, and 5.1 percent. Other gains include higher tuition reimbursement, increased prep time, more release time for Association leaders, and full family medical coverage for new members.

. . . **A team of paraeducators and teachers** at Fair Haven (Vermont) High School has settled a three-year contract with a $1.95 boost in hourly pay for paras and secretaries by 2002-03. The pact also increases base teacher pay from $22,465 to $27,500 by 2002-03, boosts the maximum teacher salary from $43,321 to $53,488 over the same period, and improves health insurance coverage.

. . . Backed by parents, students, and picketers from other unions, **members of the Riverside [Washington] Education Association** staged a one-day strike in June to protest the leadership of Superintendent Jerry Wilson—whose budget decisions have left students with inadequate supplies, outdated textbooks, and no coherent plan to meet tough state academic standards.

YOUR DUES DID IT

■ **Speaking out for retirees:** In June, NEA submitted testimony to the House Subcommittee on Social Security calling for repeal of the "government pension offset," a provision that imposes severe losses on public employees who are not covered by Social Security and who survive their spouses. These retirees can keep only a fraction of their Social Security survivor benefits. The offset primarily affects NEA members in the 13 states where school employees are not covered by Social Security. To read NEA's testimony or for more information on the offset's impact on retirees, go to www.nea.org/lac/socsec/.

■ **REACHing out to educate:** NEA's Health Information Network is sponsoring Project REACH, a pilot program to train teams of school employees to plan and implement breast and cervical cancer education programs in their school communities. Seven Project Reach teams are already participating in a pilot program in and around Sioux Falls, South Dakota. For more information, contact HIN staffer Rena Large at Rlarge@nea.org. ✔

HIGH-STAKES TESTS: Twenty states now base promotion and graduation decisions on standardized tests, but 63 percent of Americans do not feel that a student's progress can be accurately summarized by a single test. For more: www.aasa.org/ln/misc/06-19-00poll.htm.

MODERN SCHOOLS: Two new K-12 school buildings are started each work day, but, with over 52 million children now enrolled, at least 2,400 new schools will be needed by 2003. For more: www.nga.org/Pubs/IssueBriefs/2000/Sum000620SchoolNeeds.asp.

PLAYGROUNDS: Some 170,100 children every year require hospital emergency room treatment for a playground accident. Among typical dangers: hard surfacing and equipment that is too high. For more: http://pirg.org/reports/consumer/playground2000/.

DIGITAL LEARNING: A record 72 percent of classrooms are now connected to the Internet, but only 30 percent of teachers are currently able to leverage the Web for student research. Some 16 percent of teachers use the Web for lesson planning. For more: www.ceoforum.org/.

Writing Your Own Job Description

An NEA task force develops a new way for ESP to show how their jobs promote student achievement. The ultimate payoff: more *respect*.

Besides translating in one-on-one and group settings, conducting bilingual testing, and reporting results to her bilingual program director, New Mexico paraeducator Lillian Chavira encourages students to be proud of their cultural heritage.

Never tell Lillian Chavira she's "just" an ESP.

In addition to checking attendance cards and visiting the streets and homes of absent students, New Jersey school attendance officer Richie Malizia often tells a frowning child to "Smile—the sun is out!" When the smile just won't appear, Malizia will tip off teachers that something's wrong.

Never, ever tell this child expert he's "just" an ESP.

"Not everyone is cut out to be an ESP," insists Chavira, a bilingual program educational assistant at Mayfield High in Las Cruces, New Mexico. "ESP give 110 percent and consider their jobs a profession. We know our kids' parents by name because, quite often, we live in the same communities and shop in the same stores."

Malizia, who developed an interdisciplinary team to create "tailored responses" for troubled students in Union City, New Jersey, stresses that ESP are not "part of the woodwork, they're an integral part of the school community, decent people who know that if kids are treated right, they can learn."

And talk about pride. "I never met a custodian who did not refer to his or her building as 'my' school," Malizia says. "There's an incredible sense of ownership and pride in creating a decent environment where students can achieve."

Pride. Professionalism. Caring. These attributes and many more go into an ESP job description, right?

Dead wrong. More than half of America's school support employees don't even have a job description. And where one does exist, it tends to be an outdated, narrowly written list of tasks, or a disciplinary minefield strewn with gotcha words like "efficiently."

"ESP give 110 percent and consider their jobs a profession."

—Bilingual paraeducator Lillian Chavira

There's a far better way to educate your supervisor, school board, and community about the complexity and challenges of ESP work—and lay the groundwork for more pay, professional development, and respect.

That far better way is the "results-oriented job description," a clearly written document linking an ESP job to a school's overall mission of boosting student achievement.

The "ROJD" concept is simple: Identify and group essential job tasks under categories of recognizable accomplishments, like "providing for a safe learning environment" or "providing for group instruction."

A seven-member NEA Task Force on Job Descriptions and Evaluations has refined this modern management concept—adding in the key factors of employee and Association involvement—and completed a manual on developing results-oriented job descriptions linked to both fair, objective evaluation procedures and professional development.

"We plan to use this manual to educate a national cadre of ROJD trainers," says task force member Lillian Chavira. "We'll also produce an action plan and implement several local pilot projects."

According to this new NEA manual, the process of implementing a results-oriented job description program requires "great care, much information, and lots of preparation." So if you're an ESP who's interested in trying this concept, read this checklist first:

Norm Detleff

New Mexico para Lillian Chavira, far right, is ready to introduce results-oriented job descriptions in her Las Cruces school district. But she'll need the support of administrators and leaders of the Classified School Employees Council-Las Cruces—like local President Irma Valdespino, center, and Edward Fernandez, vice president of custodians.

THE BOTTOM LINE

WORLD COMPARISONS: One of every six children in the world's richest nations now live in poverty. Child poverty rates range widely, from 3 percent in Sweden to 22 percent in the United States. For more: www.unicef-icdc.org/new/index.htm.

PER PUPIL SPENDING: New Jersey spent the most per student, $9,461, in the latest year the Census Bureau has studied, Utah the least, $3,810. The national average: $5,873. For more: www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2000/cb00-96.html.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH: Texas, which disqualifies parents from Medicaid if they work more than 18 hours a week, has seen the biggest drop-off in the number of parents covered by Medicaid. For more: www.familiesusa.org/pubs/gowrk.htm.

HEALTH CARE: Six out of every 10 parents with kids eligible for free or low-cost federal health insurance, says a new study, don't realize that they can get help. Overall, 11 million children currently lack health insurance. For more: www.coveringkids.org/.

1) Make sure you and your district are on the same page. The ROJD process calls for Association consultation with the school board, the establishment of a labor-management committee, and a bit of democracy. That's because ESP actively participate in the writing of their own job description, in cooperation with administrators.

"This isn't going to work in a school district where the NEA local affiliate doesn't have a cooperative relationship with the school board," cautions NEA staffer Linda James.

Nor will this approach work in a district that's reluctant to invest financial resources in the effort.

2) Be ready to roll up your sleeves. "This project requires lots of volunteer hours, homework, and data collection," points out Lillian Chavira, "and you must be ready to work with your NEA local and your administrators."

3) Know how to think for yourself. "This is not a template," emphasizes James. "ESP jobs are so different across the spectrum, that you've got to be creative when implementing this project."

4) Be willing to think big. If you want a way to bridge the gap between job descriptions and evaluations, open up dialogue about professional development needs, and explain the value of ESP work to the community, the ROJD process can help you get started.

Chavira thinks that results-oriented job descriptions can help ESP address training needs in areas like meeting special ed requirements and handling hazardous materials.

"When we know our jobs and know them *well*, districts might think twice before trying privatization," she stresses. "ESP live and vote in the community, while private companies come in, do damage, and simply walk out."

5) Respect your own worth. "This process," says NEA staffer Tita Ferriol, "opens up communications, so that school board members can better understand all that ESP do."

"It brings ESP to a place where they can be recognized as people who can contribute a lot on a lot of levels," stresses Richie Malizia, chair of the NEA Task Force on Job Descriptions and Evaluations. "Custodians and bus drivers often talk to kids more than teachers—so wouldn't it be nice if an ESP's report on a student was actually welcomed by an administrator?" ✔

For more on results-oriented job descriptions, E-mail Tita Ferriol at Tferriol@nea.com.

PRESS CLIPS

'I'm for I-732'

"Supporters of Washington State's Teacher and School Employee Cost-of-Living Initiative, I-732, recently submitted nearly 300,000 voter signatures, guaranteeing the measure a spot on the November ballot.

"During press rallies at a Seattle middle school and the state Capitol, I-732 volunteers emphasized the grassroots nature of the signature-gathering effort. 'Initiative 732 is about my children's future,' said Mukilteo parent Nicole McGowan. 'It's about making sure every neighborhood school in the state can attract and keep bright and caring young people in the teaching profession.'

"I-732 supporters made a clear statement about the level of public support for this issue. And they collected the signatures entirely with volunteers.

"'We did it the old-fashioned way, from the grassroots up,' said Karen Anderson, co-chair of Citizens for Quality Educators and a Port Angeles school employee.

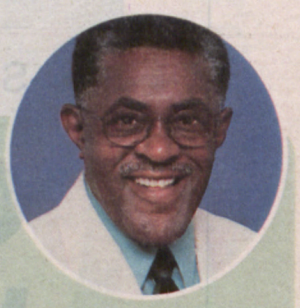
"If approved by voters in November, I-732 will provide annual cost-of-living salary increases for all public school employees and most two-year college employees." ✔

From *Washington Education Association Online*, September 2000

Back Talk

When they say: "It's not professional to belong to a union."
Think about this: "Professionalism without unionism is an empty shell," NEA Executive Director Don Cameron told RA delegates in July. "Unionism has given NEA members the clout to advocate for things like higher salaries, professional development, smaller class sizes, and funding for schools."

Do'ers Profile



CHARLES NELSON

■ **Name and profession:** Charles Nelson, high school special education teacher/department chair.
■ **NEA local affiliate:** Pulaski (Arkansas) Association of Classroom Teachers
■ **Latest accomplishment:** With a 29-year track record in special ed and 15 years of experience in "teacher-to-teacher" training, Nelson is a valuable addition to NEA's new, 20-member IDEA/Special Education Resource Cadre. This diverse team of general and special educators, with titles ranging from paraeducator to school psychologist, has been trained in proper implementation of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act of 1997.

The Cadre works closely with ASPIIRE, a partnership of seven education "service provider" organizations funded through a federal training grant. As a Cadre member, Nelson pledges to work in the Southeast "to ensure that the wide spectrum of partners involved with a child—be they administrators, speech and language pathologists, or rehab center staffers—are on the same page, and that the child's needs and plans are being fulfilled in accordance with the law."

Nelson will be taking on a facilitator/consultant role, making IDEA '97 presentations and using his broad overview of the law to "send people to the best spot to get data addressing their concerns, interests, or needs."

This veteran educator intends to convince his front-line colleagues that they're "included in IDEA '97 and have a place at the table." And he'll tackle widespread misinformation about the law in areas like alternative placement, IEP conferences and plans, team decision making, and transition goals.
■ **Words of wisdom:** "All children truly can learn, regardless of what they've been labeled, with tailor-made IEPs—individual education plans—that can bring out the best in every child. We can put together support mechanisms to help the child succeed, be they in the form of consultants, access to information, or staff training and seminars.

"Most importantly, the people who come into contact with the child each day, from the administrator to the custodian, must communicate and collaborate with one another to bring about an educational experience that benefits the child."

For more information on NEA's IDEA/Special Education Resource Cadre, contact NEA staffer Faye Northcutt at 202/822-7404.

FARM LABOR: Hundreds of thousands of American children are working 12- and 14-hour days on farms, a new report notes. Child farmworkers often risk pesticide poisoning and lifelong disabilities. For more: www.hrw.org/press/2000/06/farmwrk0619.htm.

RURAL AMERICA: Poverty rates in rural America are currently running at levels higher than in urban America. Rural communities also tend to have fewer "safety net" services available. For more: www.connectforkids.org/home page1543/index.htm.

FAMILY INCOME: According to the latest available data, the typical family with children earns $43,400 a year. Some 9 percent of America's 70 million children live in "extreme poverty," with family incomes less than half the poverty level. For more: www.kidscount.org.

INEQUALITY: The growing economic gap between high- and low-income families, suggests new research, is lowering graduation rates, in part by increasing alienation and stress in poorer households. For more: www.jcpr.org/policybriefs/vol2_num4.html.

RIGHTS WATCH

Protecting Your Intellectual Property Rights Online

So you think you own the fruits of your intellectual labor? Think again.

Suppose you create original "cyber materials" for an online course you teach as a part of your school's Web-based, distance education program.

If you later change jobs, can you still use those materials to teach the course at a different school?

Better yet, can you sell them to a company or another school?

And what if some other school or teacher uses them without permission? Can you sue for money damages?

The answer depends on who owns the copyright to these materials—you or your employer.

Historically, teachers haven't worried very much about this. In the traditional classroom setting, lesson plans and other personally produced materials have had little commercial value.

But the explosion of distance education has changed all that. Like textbooks, online instructional materials created for Web-based learning can be used and reused without the involvement of the teacher who originally created them. These materials have value separate and apart from the teacher's skill in teaching.

The proliferation of private companies offering a host of online educational services has also created a hot market for teacher-produced, instructional materials.

This, in turn, has raised the stakes in intellectual property rights.

So who owns the copyright to cyber materials? Under the federal copyright law, it's whomever the employer and employee designate as the owner.

But if there isn't any written agreement, the general rule is that the employer owns the copyright to materials that teachers produce as part of their jobs.

Materials created by teachers in the scope of their employment are deemed "works for hire" under the federal Copyright Act of 1976, and —unless the parties agree otherwise in writing— the school employer owns them.

In deciding whether particular materials are "works for hire" created in the scope of employment, courts consider these factors:

- Did the employee's job duties include creating the materials?
- Did the employee create the materials on the job or with the employer's equipment?
- Did the employee create the materials to aid or "serve" the employer?

In most cases where teachers are given the assignment to produce original "cyber materials" for the school, the teachers' creations will be deemed a "work for hire" owned by the employer.

But where teachers develop distance learning materials on their own and for their personal benefit, the teachers likely will be deemed the copyright owner, with the right to use, license, or sell the materials.

> **"The general rule is that the employer owns the copyright to materials that the teacher produces as part of her job."**

So how can teachers protect their intellectual property rights? Working with their local NEA affiliate, they should bargain protections into the collective bargaining agreement. In non-bargaining states, local NEA affiliates and school employers should develop equitable intellectual property policies.

One solution is to bargain a "shop right" arrangement that allows teachers to retain copyright ownership of the distance learning materials they create, but grants the school a "license" to use the materials as part of its educational program.

This compromise approach protects a teacher's intellectual property rights, but also recognizes a school employer's legitimate interest in securing use of the materials for instruction by the school.

There are, however, many other valid approaches that school employees and employers can use. To learn about one NEA local affiliate's solution, check out the sidebar on this page.

—Cynthia M. Chmielewski
NEA Office of General Counsel

One Local's Solution

How can an NEA local affiliate successfully bargain intellectual property rights for faculty-created distance education materials?

In Flint, Michigan, the answer for the Mott Community College Education Association is interest-based bargaining.

MCCEA initially raised the intellectual property rights issue back in 1997, and both parties agreed to use the collaborative problem-solving clause of the local contract to resolve it.

After 16 months of collaboration, that decision has paid off in an agreement that MCCEA President Steve Robinson calls a "win-win solution."

How's that possible?

The agreement divides ownership rights between the creating faculty member and the college.

The college owns the rights to the actual courseware product, but the faculty member owns the rights to all notes and materials used in its production.

The result? If a faculty member leaves the college, neither party is left empty-handed. The college can still use the courseware product, and the faculty member is free to use all the notes and materials at a new job.

The agreement also provides faculty members with other rights, including the right of first refusal to teach the course and the right to share in revenues.

To read MCCEA's innovative contract language, visit the local's Web site at www.mccea.org/intelprop.html.

THE BOTTOM LINE

FUNDING: On September 30, the end of the current federal fiscal year, the annual federal budget will be $211 billion in surplus, "the largest surplus ever in dollar terms and the largest as a percentage of GDP since 1948." For more: w3.access.gpo.gov/usbudget/index.html.

NONVOTERS: Some 40 million people registered to vote didn't cast ballots in the last congressional election year. The reason? About one-third said they were "too busy" or had work or school schedule conflicts. For more: www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2000/cb00-114.html.

MENTAL HEALTH: As many as 75 percent of the nation's incarcerated youth are suffering from depression, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, learning disabilities, and other disorders. For more: www.nmha.org/children/justjuv/index.cfm.

CHILD ABUSE: Adult women who've been abused as kids are four times more likely to suffer major depression than other women, says the Journal of the American Medical Association. For more: jama.ama-assn.org/issues/v284n5/rfull/joc92111.html.

INTERVIEW

Helen Pate-Bain Helen Wise Proof Positive: Class Size Matters

Fueled by experience and knowledge, two former NEA presidents lead a NEA-AFT effort to reduce class size—via the Internet.

Matt Ferguson

If you combine their experiences, Helen Pate-Bain and Helen Wise—both NEA Presidents in the 1970s—have over 80 years in education and Association work, 50 in the classroom alone. While Bain is the mastermind behind Project STAR, the irrefutable Tennessee class-size study, Wise fought for public education in the Pennsylvania Legislature and in the governor's office as deputy chief of staff.

Leaving retirement behind, they joined forces this year to create *Reduce Class Size Now*—a campaign to utilize the Internet as a tool to actively promote the reduction of class sizes across America (at www.reduceclasssizenow.org). They spoke recently with *NEA Today*.

Q: Why did you pick class size as your focus for improving education?

Bain: That's simple—because I was a teacher. Everybody who teaches school knows that one of the crucial elements of student success is class size. When I was younger, I would try to talk to my legislators about the importance of small class sizes and they would tell me, "teachers are just lazy; you want less students so it will be less work." Boy, did that spark me into action. From there on out I was determined to prove how important class size really is. That's why I got involved with the STAR research, and that's why I helped start this campaign.

Q: What is Reduce Class Size Now's strategy?

Wise: It starts with the premise that knowledge is power, and we all know how much knowledge is on the Internet. Through our Web site, people can access current class size research, see what efforts are being made where, and connect with each other to develop action plans and timelines. The site also addresses anti-small class size literature and public education critics. I firmly believe that if we facilitate information sharing and attack critics head-on, interested individuals and groups will start to organize themselves into coalitions that will bring about class size change.

Q: How did you get started on this campaign?

Wise: Two months out of the winter I live in Gulf Shores, Alabama—which is where Helen lives year-round. We met for coffee one day in February and she absolutely wowed me with her energy and knowledge on the subject. She convinced me that together we could make a difference. Within months, we got support from both NEA and AFT, hooked up with technology experts, and launched the Web site.

Q: People have talked about class size for decades. Why is this issue winnable now?

Bain: This is winnable for several reasons. First, we have concrete significant research through STAR that proves reducing class sizes in grades K-3 has a lasting impact on children as they get older. Second, for the first time in history, the federal government has earmarked a large amount of money specifically for this purpose—an anticipated $12.4 billion over 7 years to help schools hire teachers and reduce class size in the early grades. This year alone, states are receiving between $6 million and $130 million. In addition, practically every state has its own budget surplus right now. I can't think of a better time to make this happen. We have the research and success stories, we have the dollars, and we have an increased interest in education, fueled by politicians and concerned citizens. Now we just have to combine the three to bring about this change.

Q: One criticism of the California effort to reduce class size is that the state couldn't find enough good teachers to staff the smaller classes, so they hired unqualified people. How can we deal with problems like this?

Wise: We have to get creative. Maybe instead of reducing all K-3 classes in one year—as California did—you reduce grades by a year at a time. For now we can add aides, or subdivide large classes for subjects like reading.

Our answer to lots of students has always been to bring in trailers, or build new buildings, or jam 40 children in one classroom. But in every community in America we have empty buildings. Now I'm not saying we waive safety regulations, but why can't we start investigating how to use these empty buildings to our benefit? As a child, I was taught math in a church basement because we didn't have enough rooms in the school. Did I learn less math? Absolutely not. I would have learned less math if I had been crammed into a 40-student classroom.

I know there are challenges with reducing class sizes—including how to get good teachers. But now is the time to get creative in finding solutions. What's the alternative?

Q: How can individuals help with the campaign?

Bain: Most educators have a difficult time getting involved in politics, but on this issue, we absolutely must. Find out who your state representatives are and ask them where they stand on the class size issue. Feed them as much research and literature as you can—a lot of which you can get from the Web site.

Wise: I agree. Educators are going to be the change-agents for this issue. Look at our Web site, see how much money your state received from the federal government, and go find out how it was spent. Start asking very public questions and demand accountability. Begin with your school board; make them tell you where your district's share of the dollars went. If you have too many children in your classroom, talk to their parents and let them know their kids are being shortchanged. There aren't many parents who, if told their children could be taught in smaller classrooms, wouldn't take action to help make that happen. We invite all school employees and parents to join us in this campaign to make smaller class sizes a reality by 2004. ✔

RESOURCES

- Heros, Inc. has links to dozens of Web sites and articles about class size, including information about Projects STAR and SAGE http://www.heros-inc.org/
- Links for the evidence for class size reduction, provided by the American Association of School Administrators. Includes local success stories. http://www.aasa.org/issues/classsize/classsize.htm
- Go to www.nea.org for updates about NEA's leadership on the smaller class size front.
- Report from the American Federation of Teachers comparing the educational benefits of vouchers vs. smaller classes http://www.aft.org//vouchers/report/index.htm
- Policy.com has its own links to information about class size www.policy.com/issuewk/1999/1005_97/detail725.html
- Myths and realities on class size reduction from the US Department of Education www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ClassSize/myths.html

Math Texts Don't Add Up

Will publishers help find the solution?

Growing up in rural Idaho, **Gerald Kulm** would troop off to a two-room schoolhouse, then "come home, sit my brothers and sisters down, and teach them what I'd learned." He went on to teach high school students, and then prospective math teachers.

Now, Kulm heads up a panel of math educators for the American Association for the Advancement of Science that critiques math best sellers on the textbook market.

The panel's first report, on middle school math books, flunked every popular, commercially produced textbook that came under scrutiny.

Kulm's second report, on algebra texts, was a bit more upbeat—seven were judged "adequate." Still, five of the 12 texts were "so inadequate that they lack potential for student learning." None was rated "excellent."

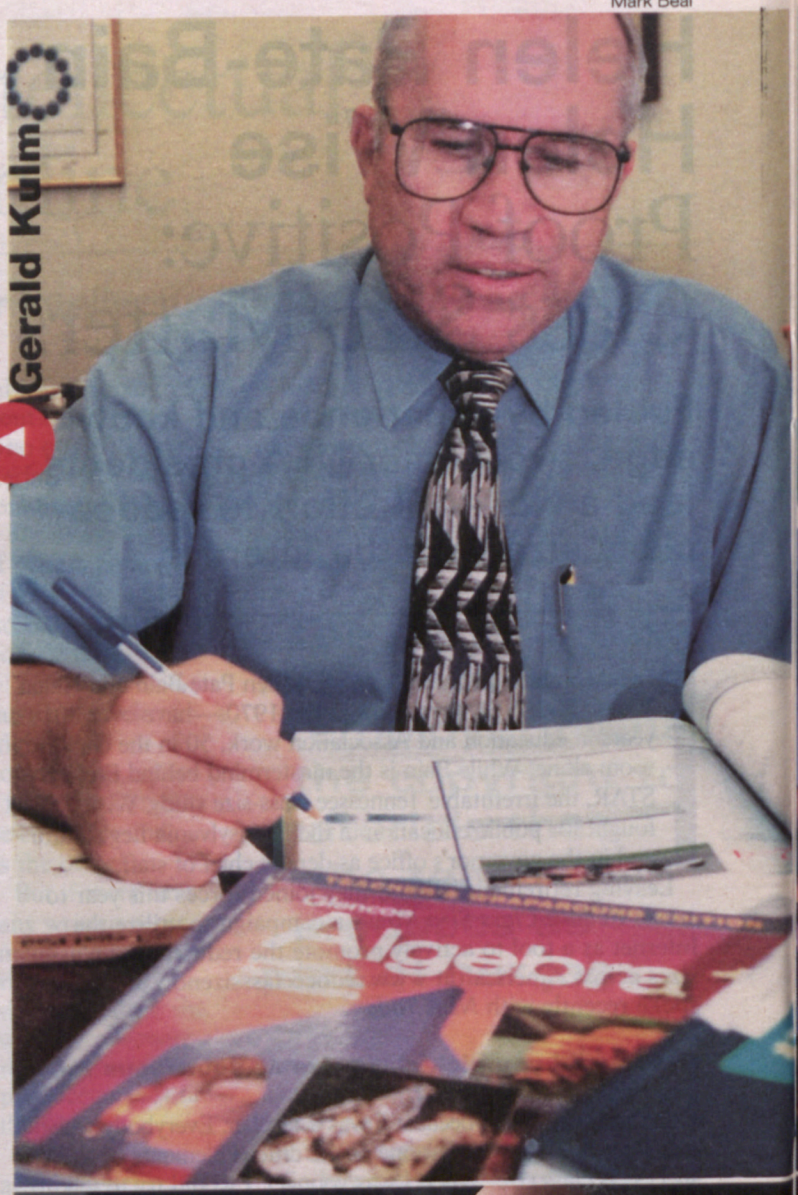
What's the problem? For most of the books, Kulm explains, the teacher editions don't help teachers teach—a critical factor, since most American teachers must rely on books for lesson plans. European and Asian teachers have much more time for collaboration and lesson prep.

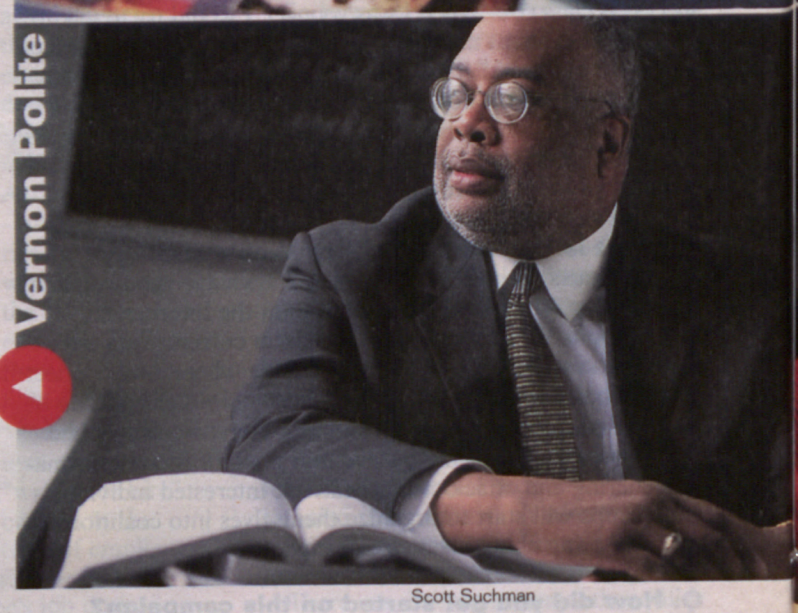
Kulm adds that the books try to cover too much. "Each state has its own standards, and the commercial texts try to address the standards of as many states as possible."

Impact: The reports may be impacting the textbook industry. Kulm says that when the first report was issued, publishers said, "You're crazy!" But when the algebra report came out a year later, publishers asked for help in interpreting the findings.

For More: Visit www.project2061.org/newsinfo/press/rl000426.htm for study summaries and links to more detailed results and other AAAS evaluations.

Mark Beal





Scott Suchman

On Educating Black Males

Innovator:
Vernon Polite

Job: Associate professor, coordinator of graduate programs for education administration, Catholic University

Bright Idea: As editor of *African American Males in School and Society* (Teachers College Press), Polite has pulled together a book targeted to educators that explores barriers to learning that Black males face throughout their K-12 years, into college, and beyond.

As early as second or third grade, African American males begin receiving subliminal messages about who they are in society, says Polite. And those messages, quite often, aren't good.

"Parity in education for African American males is still not there," asserts Polite, a former public school administrator and elementary and high school principal.

"In terms of their treatment, the number of expulsions and disciplinary actions taken in school, and the disproportionate referrals to special ed as opposed to gifted and talented programs, these students get the message that they are a problem population," Polite notes.

With co-editor James Earl Davis, Polite presents the work of leading scholars such as Michele Foster and Edmund W. Gordon, who examine education policies and practices that challenge African American males' ability to succeed.

Topics include attitudes toward learning, identity development, achievement and social class, the impact of technology, responsible fatherhood, and college recruitment and retention.

Looking at the cycle of failure that many young Black males experience, Polite emphasizes the importance of getting them through the K-12 years in a positive mode. Otherwise, he notes, "they're not going to make it to higher ed at all.

"And if we fail to use technology for knowledge construction," Polite adds, "we relegate this entire population from the job market of the future."

Impact: The book provides concrete recommendations for educators, parents, school administrators, and policy-makers that, according to Polite, stand to positively influence the education and social outcomes of African American males.

For More: E-mail Polite at polite@cua.edu. To order *African American Males in School and Society* ($23.95 paper), visit www.teacherscollegepress.com/authfiles/polite.html or call 800/575-6566.

Chris Seward

Drug Programs That Work

In 1978, nurse **Denise Hallfors** *saw a young drug addict after open heart surgery to repair drug-induced damage. "He had tubes everywhere. His thin chest had been wired and sutured shut," she recalls. "I got him to bring friends in to see the horrible things he was living through." Now a University of North Carolina professor, Hallfors has surveyed schools to learn what prevention programs they use—and isn't happy with the results.*

What programs are most popular?
Drug Awareness and Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.), Here's Looking At You, and McGruff's Drug Prevention and Child Protection.

But there's no credible research that these programs work. D.A.R.E. has been found to have minimal short-term and no long-term effect. It's not enough for a teacher, parent, or police officer to tell children that drugs are bad for you.

Are there programs that do work?
Yes. They include Reconnecting Youth, Life Skills Training, Project ALERT, Project STAR, Alcohol Misuse Prevention, and Project Northland.

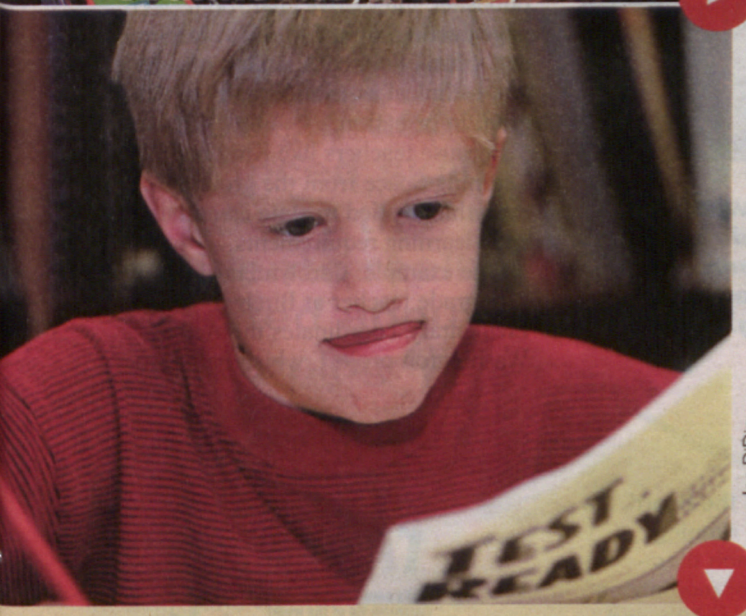
Effective programs make extensive use of role-playing to help children rehearse what to do when they run into difficult life situations.

They're carefully developed and should be carried out as designed. Modifying them—doing less role-playing, for example—may harm their effectiveness.

Why don't districts use the best programs?
A program may be politically popular or well-marketed, with user-friendly materials. But that doesn't mean it actually works.

For More: Visit www.sph.unc.edu/external_affairs/news/. Go to Spring 2000 news releases and click on "Study of 81 Districts..." for the complete study. E-mail Hallfors at denise_hallfors@unc.edu.

Joe Glick



Joe DiDio

Know Rocket Scientists?

Innovators: **Nick Frankovits, Leila Gay Evans, Grant Luton**

Jobs: Teachers from Springfield Local High School in Akron, Ohio, and directors of Partnership for America's Future Inc. (PAF Inc.)

Bright Idea: PAF Inc., founded in 1990 by Frankovits (center), posts challenges for young "inventucators" online, inviting them to apply scientific problem-solving methods to real-life quandaries submitted by businesses and other organizations.

Students may elect to design a bicycle that's more visible at night, devise a method to demonstrate the Doppler effect in a classroom, or create a logo for a local company.

Inventors with the most creative and viable solutions may be rewarded with modest donations from businesses or trips to demonstrate their project.

But "we believe the greatest reward will come from a feeling of personal success," says Evans, a 30-year teaching veteran. "When students believe in themselves and the processes they are being taught, there is no limit to what they can achieve."

To preserve these student achievements, Frankovits, Evans, and Luton established the National Gallery for America's Young Inventors in conjunction with the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

The gallery inducts a maximum of six inventions annually, each chosen by a student board of directors. The youngest inductee is eight-year-old Spencer Rocco Whale, who invented "KidKare," a device that combines a riding toy, such as a wagon, with an I.V. pole to make an unpleasant hospital experience less traumatic for children.

Next Steps: As a result of her work with four of the Rocket Boys from the movie *October Sky*, Evans is developing Rocket Camps nationwide, hoping to inspire a new generation of forward-looking young scientists.

For More: Call 330/376-8300 or visit www.pafinc.com.

Members Speak Out On Coping With Standards

Innovator: **Tim Crawford**

Job: NEA staffer managing NEA teacher quality programs and projects

Bright Idea: As the standards movement began to gather steam, NEA's Teaching and Learning unit set out to provide answers to members' questions about high-stakes testing and accountability. That's how the Student Assessment Series was born. Titles such as *Assessing Learning in the Classroom* and *Implementing Standards-Based Education* have been published to help provide knowledge and skills and to relieve members' stress about standards and testing.

"There was still one voice missing from the discussion of standards implementation and testing: the teacher's voice," says Crawford, who's part of NEA's Teaching and Learning staff.

That voice comes through loud and clear in the newly released publication *Coping with Standards, Tests, and Accountability*.

"I was particularly pleased that this book provided an opportunity to co-publish with the NEA Professional Library," Crawford notes.

The book presents the views of teachers, teacher educators, and administrators who have thought deeply and written extensively about accountability, testing, and standards programs in states and school districts throughout the nation.

Because standards implementation efforts differ from state to state—and often from community to community within a state—the book's 12 well-referenced chapters represent a wide variety of views and experiences.

For More: Contact the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200 or visit the Web at www.nea.org/books. The Student Assessment Series publications can also be ordered at that Web site.

What's So Great About Technology?

Thousands of educators are rebooting their attitudes now that they're realizing how technology can enhance learning.

When it comes to technology, everyone seems to want more—more equipment, more speed, more memory. But to what end? If it's just to use computers to record grades or write reports, educators may find it hard to regard technology as more than an overhyped teaching fad.

But in Washington state, educators like Shelee King are showing their colleagues how to harness the true teaching potential that technology harbors with a project called The Learning Space.

Andy Rogers

"Technology is the whole notion of knocking down the walls of the classroom," says Washington state teacher Shelee King.

"Most teachers have used computers as a basic tool to accomplish something they already had been doing or teaching," says King, a technology integration specialist in the Mukilteo school district. "We're able to show them how to use advanced skills, such as video conferencing, Web design, and Internet search projects, to get students really excited about learning."

King has worked on the Washington Education Association's Learning Space project since its creation in 1996. She's part of a cadre of 70 teachers who've showed other educators how to use technology to turn around their teaching practice.

Training workshops, an online learning community, an annual technology showcase called "Tomorrow's Classroom," and The Learning Space Web site are all part of the package—and you don't have to live in Washington to take advantage of them.

Thousands of teachers, from all across the world, are now logging on to www.learningspace.org, exchanging ideas for using technology to improve student achievement.

The site features an online lesson plan publisher, interactive chat room, Web page hosting, links to project resources and virtual field trips, online newsletters and technical assistance, and technology grant information.

Because teachers like King built The Learning Space from the ground up, everything is tied to state essential academic learning requirements.

One example: Carolyn Hinshaw, a fifth grade teacher at Birchwood Elementary, coordinates the Across Washington project, which helps stu-

Idea Exchange

Red Ribbon Week

Here are some activities for Red Ribbon Week, a "Just Say No To Drugs" program during the last week of October.

- Have students trace one of their feet on red paper, cut it out, and sign it. Glue the feet on a white banner, spelling out the words "Take a Stand Against Drugs" with the feet.
- Ask a local nursery to donate several hundred red tulip bulbs and bulb food. Have the students plant a piece of paper with a promise to be drug-free along with the bulb and food. In the spring, a garden of red tulips will remind them of their promise. Purple crocuses can be planted among the tulips to spell out "No."
- Have students decorate donated grocery bags with an anti-drug slogan and return them to the store to be used.

Michelle Welch
Bakersfield, California

Multiplication Patterns

I write out the multiplication facts (0x0 to 12x12) on the chalkboards—169 problems in all! Then I tell my students to copy them all and that they'll be tested on those facts. You can imagine the complaints!

I then remind them that math is filled with patterns and ask if they can discern any. Soon, someone spots that any number times zero is zero. I erase 25 problems from the board, and we're off and running.

They quickly teach themselves the rules for multiplying by ones, twos, fives, 10s, and most of the 11s. Someone notices that 3x4 is the same as 4x3 and that there are others like that, so the remaining duplicates are eliminated.

What we have left are a paltry 29 multiplication problems to write down. We practice a few each week, since distributed practice is how students learn their facts, and, in a couple of months, all the second graders know their multiplication facts through the 12s.

Jay Edwards
Hemet, California

Works4Me
nea's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea? You can pass along your tips to *NEA Today*'s more than 2.4 million readers in one of five ways:

- By mail: *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- By phone: 202/822-7201
- By fax: 202/822-7206
- By E-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org
- Through the Web: www.nea.org/neatoday

dents learn about their state while satisfying state academic learning mandates.

Her online projects include Spring Across Washington, a six-week effort that has students create a Web site to document what spring is like in their region. Students involved in the project post digital photos and poetry and use E-mail to compare results with other classrooms around the state.

Thanks to the practical nature of what The Learning Space has to offer, interest in incorporating technology into teaching has exploded. Last year, King and 11 other Learning Space volunteers kicked off the first Tomorrow's Classroom technology showcase.

More than 200 teachers, helped by WEA stipends of $200 each, created booths to share the variety of learning projects they implemented throughout the year. The event attracted 10,000 educators, administrators, students, parents, and the general public from across the state.

"Tomorrow's Classroom 2000: A Digital Journey," held this past August, emphasized how classrooms have become collaborative and interactive. Theme-based pavilions focused on topics such as distance learning, curriculum assessment, homework help, teacher training, and a back-to-school technology mall.

All this may strike some educators as too futuristic. But Learning Space educators see these technological advances as classroom realities.

"We were able to show them how to use advanced skills to get the students really excited about learning."

—Shelee King, technology integration specialist

"The biggest change we're seeing is the infusion of technology into the curriculum," says Carolyn Hinshaw, an original cadre member and Learning Space lead teacher. "Technology is becoming an everyday part of the regular classroom."

"Technology is the whole notion of knocking down the walls of the classroom," adds Shelee King. "The only way our students are going to achieve in this world is through the use of technology."

—Michelle Y. Green

For more:
Visit www.learningspace.org for free online training modules. The Learning Space also has a core team of 40 trainers offering fee-scheduled consultation.

[DILEMMA]

How do you teach today's lessons with yesteryear's textbooks?

One way is to supplement old textbooks with today's newspapers. In my classroom, I use the *Buffalo News*. You need to be flexible, because the paper arrives minutes before the students do. But there are many flexible lessons that require only scissors, glue, maps, and a lot of space.

We also go online to the *Buffalo News* to find out the continuing story the next day or to go to other sources for information on a discovered topic. You can't get more up to date than that.

For teachers who think their students would have difficulty reading the news, I would encourage giving it a try. My students, grades four through six, are almost all identified as educationally handicapped or in need of remediation. Newspaper day is usually the best day of our week.

Elaine Hardman
Fourth through sixth grade teacher
Wellsville, New York

■ I found myself in just this predicament nine years ago. Though I'd been hired to teach sixth grade language arts, I ended up teaching several sections of seventh and eighth grade social studies and language arts.

To complicate my challenge, I discovered that the seventh grade social studies text was copyrighted before these students had been born!

The students and I decided to use the text to determine the scope and sequence of what we would study, and we began a year of discovery of the Western Hemisphere together.

We used the media center extensively, as well as other resources in our community. This was before the Internet and iMac labs.

The students and I looked forward to our discoveries and relied on each other for information. In cooperative groups, independently and as a class, we undertook to research and update our tired text. We even collaborated on test questions. I think that taught students how tentative some information is, and how vital it is to hone our research skills.

In my experience, the outdated textbooks freed my class and me to create our own learning—ultimately, the best!

Sandra Gotfred
Middle school teacher
Pueblo, Colorado

■ It's relatively easy to get examination copies of the new textbooks from textbook suppliers, and they make a wonderful resource for updating and enriching an older textbook.

I speak from experience: The chemistry book I teach from was published in 1983. I've gotten not only new ideas from the new books, but safer and more environmentally sound labs, too.

As a final bonus, when the department decided to get new books this year, picking the text was easy, since I was already familiar with the new chemistry texts on the market.

Susan Smith
High school chemistry teacher
Rohnert Park, California

Got an Answer?

How do you improve student attendance?

Send your answer by regular mail, by Fax to 202/822-7206, or by E-mail to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Please include your name, city, state, job title, and grade level, if applicable.

Published respondents will receive a new *NEA Today* mug!

Ted Pitts

New Teachers Get a Boost

Interactive training seminars bolster the confidence of new teachers of all ages in Massachusetts.

When seventh grade English teacher Tim Webber wended his way through his first year in the classroom, he had plenty of help.

For one, Webber had a mentor. But he also benefitted from having participated in Case Study Seminars for Beginning Teachers, a five-session training series developed by the Massachusetts Teachers Association that shores up classroom skills and keeps new teachers up-to-date on education issues.

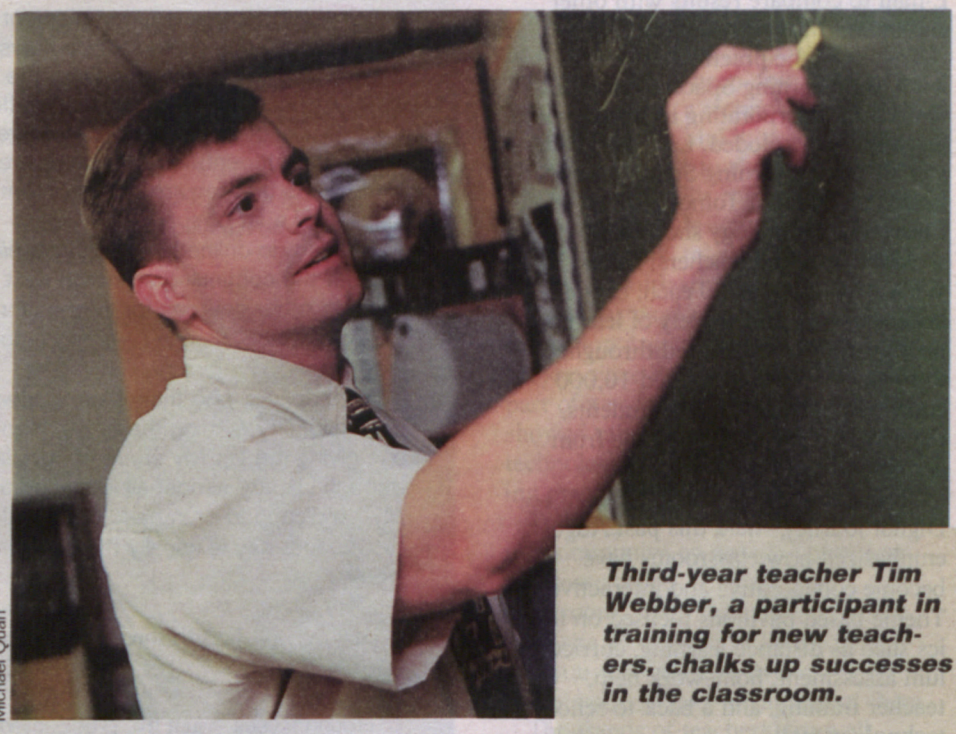
"The MTA sessions gave me a broader perspective of issues," says Webber, who's now in his third year of teaching at the Bromfield School in Bellingham, Massachusetts. "They helped me become a reflective practitioner—and assess myself as I go along."

When first grade teacher Colleen Faris started her first year in the classroom, she, too, had plenty of experience to back her up—her own.

Faris had operated a private preschool for 23 years and earned a master's degree in special ed before coming to Fallbrook Elementary.

Yet "when I saw the ad in MTA's monthly newspaper," Faris recalls, "I said, 'I'm not a young kid, but as far as being specifically tuned to the issues of the time, I need a refresher course.'"

Like Webber, Faris gleaned a lot of practical knowledge from the seminars. She was brought up to speed on standards-based assessment, and she found the information on new issues in special ed to be particularly helpful.



Michael Quan

Third-year teacher Tim Webber, a participant in training for new teachers, chalks up successes in the classroom.

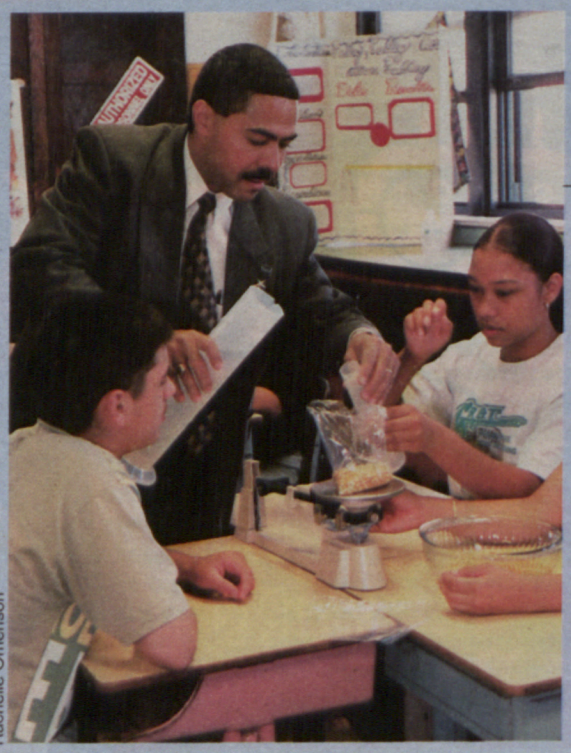
Amid a turbulent climate of education reform, NEA's Massachusetts state affiliate is helping "new" teachers of all ages and backgrounds develop a firm footing in the classroom.

"We've looked at the needs of the many new teachers coming in," says Mary Nowasaki, a geography teacher at Auburn Middle School who's one of the MTA trainers.

"As the education climate has changed," notes Nowasaki, "we've concentrated on presenting information on education reform, recertification, and the statewide testing program."

More than 200 teachers in six Massachusetts districts were trained last year in standards-based curriculum instruction, classroom management, assessment, issues in special education, and instructional technology. Funded by the state board of education, the Association seminars were offered to first- and second-year teachers, who received professional development or continuing education credits.

Nowasaki and her co-trainer, Judy Ferrari, an English teacher at Westborough High, made sure the



Rachelle Ornenson

How I Did It

Yomare Polanco
Middle school science teacher
New Brunswick, New Jersey

To keep 57 middle school students interested in science and still follow state curriculum guidelines, I created a cross-curricular project called "Looking for the best grain."

Drawing from my background as a chemical engineer, I wanted to combine the rigors of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards with a hands-on approach to science. The "Looking for the Best Grain" project combines mathematics, science, and Internet research while fostering a passion for learning at a young age.

Students apply problem-solving skills to real-life situations by determining which type of grain—soft white wheat, dark spring wheat, or hard winter wheat—makes the best bread.

To do this, they have to learn how to conduct a scientific experiment by separating the hull from the endosperm in the grain and creating a hypothesis about which grain makes the best baking flour—projects that meet New Jersey Core Curriculum Standard 5.2.

To progress on their projects, students must recognize the basic structure of grain, which leads them to meet Standard 5.6. They must integrate mathematical charts, meeting Standard 5.5.

Working with the grain involves various pieces of machinery, so stu-

three-hour sessions were structured so that participant eyes didn't glaze over.

Sessions were held several weeks apart, taking place right after school, with a pizza break in the middle. And the course wasn't a "lecture" series.

"We split into small groups, and people went back and forth about special ed issues," Colleen Faris notes. "It was very interactive."

The seminars have helped new teachers in Massachusetts gain confidence, sometimes showing them that what they think they're doing right is, actually, right.

"The sessions broadened my perspective. They helped me to be a reflective practitioner."

—Tim Webber, seventh grade English teacher

"The session I enjoyed most was on integrating the Massachusetts curricular framework into our lesson planning," says Tim Webber. "It was good getting to know about other teachers' approaches and to reaffirm that what I'm doing is working out."

In the end, the seminars provide one special resource that both new and veteran teachers can benefit from: thinking time.

"I used this block of time to think about lessons I've done," says Webber, "whether they worked well, and how I could do things better." ✔

—Michelle Y. Green

For more:
Contact kskinner@massteacher.org for information on training seminars.

dents review safety procedures, which in turn meets Standard 5.4.

Not only are students enjoying science, but they finally have an answer to the question, "When will I use this in real life?"

The activities demonstrate to students how, in modern industry, chemists, engineers, and scientists work and care about the production of quality food.

Locally, the Stevens Institute of Technology and K.Jabat Inc. enhance this project by showing my students the practical applications of their results in real-life jobs.

Students also post the data from their experiments on the Web and then discuss them with scientists around the world via E-mail.

For the complete experiment and findings, visit the Web at www.angelfire.com/nj/suprema/.

[DILEMMA]

How do you say 'no' to extra assignments on the job?

My most effective "no" was given the day my principal asked me to serve on another committee this year. My first impulse was just to tell him "no," but I asked him for a couple of hours to decide.

I went back and made a list of all the school events and responsibilities currently on my agenda. When I saw the principal later that day, I asked him which items I could eliminate in order to assume the new committee assignment.

I didn't have to say "no" because my principal could see that I was already overcommitted. He withdrew his request.

Barbara Kissler
High school home economics teacher
North Platte, Nebraska

■ My solution is simple, but sometimes the hardest thing for me to do.

As a 20-year veteran, I've been on a *ton* of committees. So, every five years or so, I put myself on a "sabbatical" from committees.

I purposely wipe my slate clean. I gently tell everyone, including my principal, that next year is my year off all unnecessary committees.

That year that I'm off, I delight in listening to the intercom announce yet another early morning or after school meeting that's starting, that I *don't* have to go to.

The following year, I pick and choose which things I'll get myself back into. Somehow, by the time the next "sabbatical" roles around, I'm up to my eyeballs again and ready for some well-deserved time off. The people on my staff don't seem to mind. In fact, some have followed suit.

Mary Beth Solano
Third grade teacher
Timnath, Colorado

■ I use creative statements to turn a negative into a positive situation.

One possibility: "No, thank you. The students I currently serve deserve 100 percent of my time and energy."

Another one: "No, thank you. It's important that you give less experienced colleagues an opportunity to serve" (or "to gain that valuable experience").

Jan Zurenko
Special ed teacher
Otsego, Michigan

■ First, give yourself permission to say "no." It doesn't mean that you're less of a professional or lazy. You decline because you have already established your priorities and allocated your time. That has to include some personal time for you.

Second, rehearse how to respond, so when an administrator approaches with yet another "opportunity," you can gracefully say, "I appreciate your confidence in me. I am, however, focusing my energy on these items at the moment."

Ted Pitts

It's true that the busiest teachers are often called on to perform just one more task, and then one more, and so on. It's your duty to yourself and your profession to know when to draw the line.

Jan Bowman
High school English teacher
Davidsville, Pennsylvania

Got an Answer?

What do you do when parents show no interest in things like IEP meetings?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. You can also fax to 202/822-7206 or use regular mail. Please include your name, city, state, job title, and grade level, if applicable.

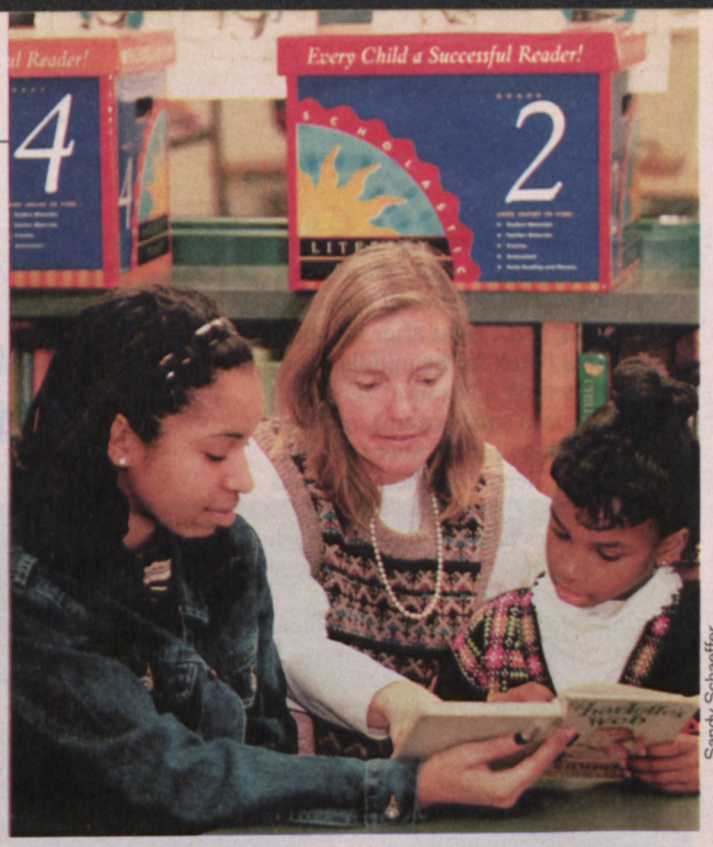
Published respondents will receive a new *NEA Today* mug!

"Real Teachers. . . beg for the barf bags on airplanes because they are useful in hundreds of math, science, and holiday activities.**"**

Marcia Chambers, fourth grade teacher, Lancaster, Wisconsin

Learning

Lessons on Reading for Capitol Hill



Sandy Schaeffer

NEA and the International Reading Association team up to give Washington policy-makers a better understanding of just how complex and challenging it is to teach reading.

If you think that everything out there on reading instruction could fill a library almost all by itself, you're right. Over 100,000 academic journal articles on reading are now in print.

Distilling the wisdom from all this research isn't easy, not for scholars in the field and certainly not for the lawmakers responsible for setting federal policy on reading.

That's why, this past summer, NEA joined with the International Reading Association to offer policy-makers on Capitol Hill an in-depth briefing on a remarkable new resource for everyone who cares about increasing the effectiveness of reading instruction.

This new resource, the recently released third edition of the *Handbook of Reading Research,* analyzes what's to be learned from the tens of thousands of articles on reading.

At 1,000 pages, the *Handbook* isn't exactly light reading. But it can help policy-makers on Capitol Hill better understand what works in reading instruction—and avoid the sorts of simplistic "mandates" from above that can drive dedicated educators crazy.

"Part of the point in discussing the *Handbook* on Capitol Hill," explains NEA staffer Barbara Kapinus, "was to help policy-makers understand just how rich and varied the research really is."

One example: People outside the classroom, Kapinus points out, often think that learning to read is a process that ends as soon as a child can decode the words on a page. But learning to comprehend, analyze, remember, and use what is read—and come back for more—is actually a learning process that continues through life.

At the Capitol Hill briefing, two of the *Handbook* editors, Michael Kamil from Stanford and Rebecca Barr from National-Louis University in Illinois, were also on hand to describe how this new work differs from other recent reading research reviews.

"The *Handbook* is the most comprehensive set of reviews about reading research currently available," Kamil told the Capitol Hill briefing.

The *Handbook* covers both experimental studies that have tested different reading instructional techniques against one another and descriptive studies, where researchers have watched to see exactly how children interact with print. As NEA's Kapinus points out, these descriptive studies—not included in earlier reviews—can be just as valuable as experimental studies.

Co-editor Barr explained to her Capitol Hill audience that the *Handbook* goes beyond questions of what *techniques* work to examine how various *approaches* work. This is research that can help educators select the most effective strategies for their particular classes or students.

Are the policy-makers quick studies (or at least speed readers)?

"If they come away with a better knowledge of how reading works—and start funding programs that reflect that knowledge," says Kapinus, "they'll get good marks." ✔

For more:
To see the wide range of topics covered in the *Handbook on Reading Research*, check out the table of contents on the Web at www.stanford.edu/~mkamil/hrr3/index.htm. To order a copy of the *Handbook* ($85), go to www.nea.org/neatoday/0009/reading.html.

HOW TO... BRING STORIES TO LIFE

Who better to bring a story to life than actors? That's the premise behind the volunteer organization Book PALS (Performing Artists for Literacy in Schools), which sends professional actors into schools in at-risk neighborhoods to instill in children the desire to read.

Founded in 1993 by Barbara Bains of TV's *Mission Impossible* fame, Book PALS now read to more than 40,000 students in 900 schools each week.

You don't need an Oscar to bring drama into reading time. Just take a look at these Book PALS tips for reading aloud:

- Choose quality literature. Half the battle of reading aloud successfully to children of all ages is book selection.
- Read the book to yourself first to spot material to shorten, elaborate on, or eliminate.
- Look for places or words that lend themselves to sound effects or "coloring," that is, words that you can make sound like what they are—cold, soft, angry.
- Wait for the attention of the whole group. Compliment those who are focused, gently look at those who are fidgeting. Lead children in stretching exercises between read-aloud segments, then allow them a moment to settle down quietly.
- Even sixth grade students love a good picture book. There are many picture books with powerful themes that can elicit excellent discussions.
- Don't start a reading if you don't have enough time to introduce the book, read it properly, and discuss it afterward.
- Don't read too fast or too slow. Read rapidly through sections that are familiar. Slow down when you are setting up a revelation or surprise.
- Don't impose your interpretations on a story. Let interpretations come from the students, with your gentle guidance.
- Don't be afraid to give the characters different voices.

For more information, visit www.bookpals.net. To "book" a Book PAL for your school, call Ellen Nathan, the national program director, at 323/549-6709.

Scott Suchman

A Primer on the Texas Miracle

Where was George Bush when Texas leaders got serious about education?

Throughout the country, George Bush has been taking credit for leading the way to Texas's improved test scores, especially for minority students. But from inside the Lone Star State's schools, the view is different.

Texas teachers say the crucial reforms that led to today's better test results happened before Bush became governor—and, in fact, he's been against some of them.

A recent report put Texas among the top states for student test scores, after allowing for family background. What did the researchers give as reasons for Texas' success?

The report, from the RAND Corporation, said the two biggest reasons were smaller classes in k-4 (a maximum of 22) and wider access to public pre-school (over 20 percent in Texas, higher than in any other state).

How did smaller primary grade classes and the big push for public pre-schools come to Texas?

Both of these reforms were launched by the pivotal Texas education law of 1984, usually called HB72. This law also included other important changes, such as planning periods for all teachers, dropout reduction efforts, higher salaries, and the "no pass, no play" provision requiring athletes to maintain academic standards or lose their eligibility to play.

All of these provisions upgraded the importance of learning in Texas. They were proposed by a commission led by Ross Perot that was appointed by Governor Mark White. And White worked hard to see them enacted into law.

George Bush, according to his official biography, was working in his family oil business at the time.

Has George Bush proposed federal efforts to reduce class size or to expand public pre-school in his campaign for President?

No. But Al Gore has. He pledges to complete the job of hiring 100,000 new teachers for the early grades, and to help communities build more schools so they will have modern classrooms to teach in.

Gore also proposes a $50 billion plan to provide universal access to high-quality pre-school, starting with all four-year-olds. Parents would not be required to send their children, but tuition would no longer be a barrier.

What other factors have helped Texas teachers boost student achievement, especially for minority students?

A lawsuit brought by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund led to a state Supreme Court ruling in 1989 declaring that the Texas school finance system was unconstitutional.

The evidence showed the wealthiest district in Texas had over $14 million of assessed valuation per child, while the poorest district had only $20,000—a ratio of 700 to 1.

As a result, children in wealthy communities had far more money spent on their public education, even though their parents paid lower taxes than residents of poor communities. The court ordered the state to change that.

The legislature responded with a 1993 law often called "Robin Hood," under which state funds are used to compensate—partially—for local differences in property wealth. Ann Richards was the governor when this law was passed.

George Bush, that year, was working with a group of partners who had bought the Texas Rangers baseball team.

Now that he is governor, Bush says he's against Robin Hood.

What has Bush done about education as governor?

Mostly, he's not tried to turn the clock back on the reforms launched by his predecessors. He has also promoted more funding for reading programs.

On the negative side, Bush pushed for vouchers in all three of the legislative sessions during his time in office. The legislature turned him down, but he kept coming back to try again.

Where has Bush stood on state funding for education?

Last year, the state had a budget surplus of $6 billion. The legislature wanted to use most of this surplus for teacher raises, realizing that Texas salaries are far below the national average.

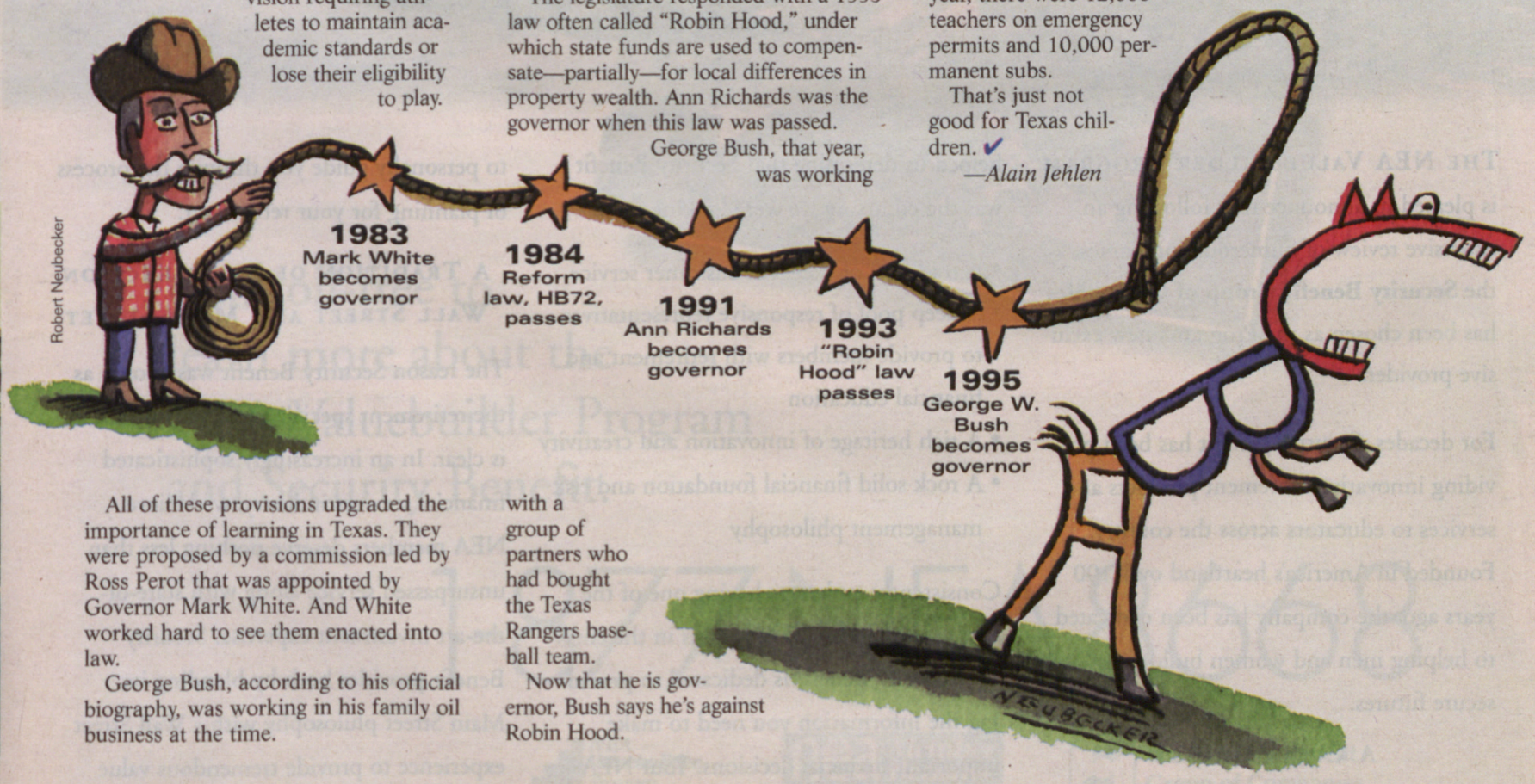
Governor Bush disagreed. He wanted the lion's share for tax cuts. The money left over, Bush said, should go to school boards to use as they saw fit. He didn't want it earmarked for teacher raises.

After a six-month battle with the legislature, the governor got $2 billion in tax cuts, but he had to accept $3,000 raises for all teachers. The compromise left Texas teachers better off than before. But due to Bush's opposition, their salaries are still several thousand dollars below the national average.

Low salaries make it hard to attract and keep qualified teachers. Texas has 500,000 certified teachers who have left the profession. It needs only 270,000 to staff every classroom, but districts can't fill vacancies. Last year, there were 12,000 teachers on emergency permits and 10,000 permanent subs.

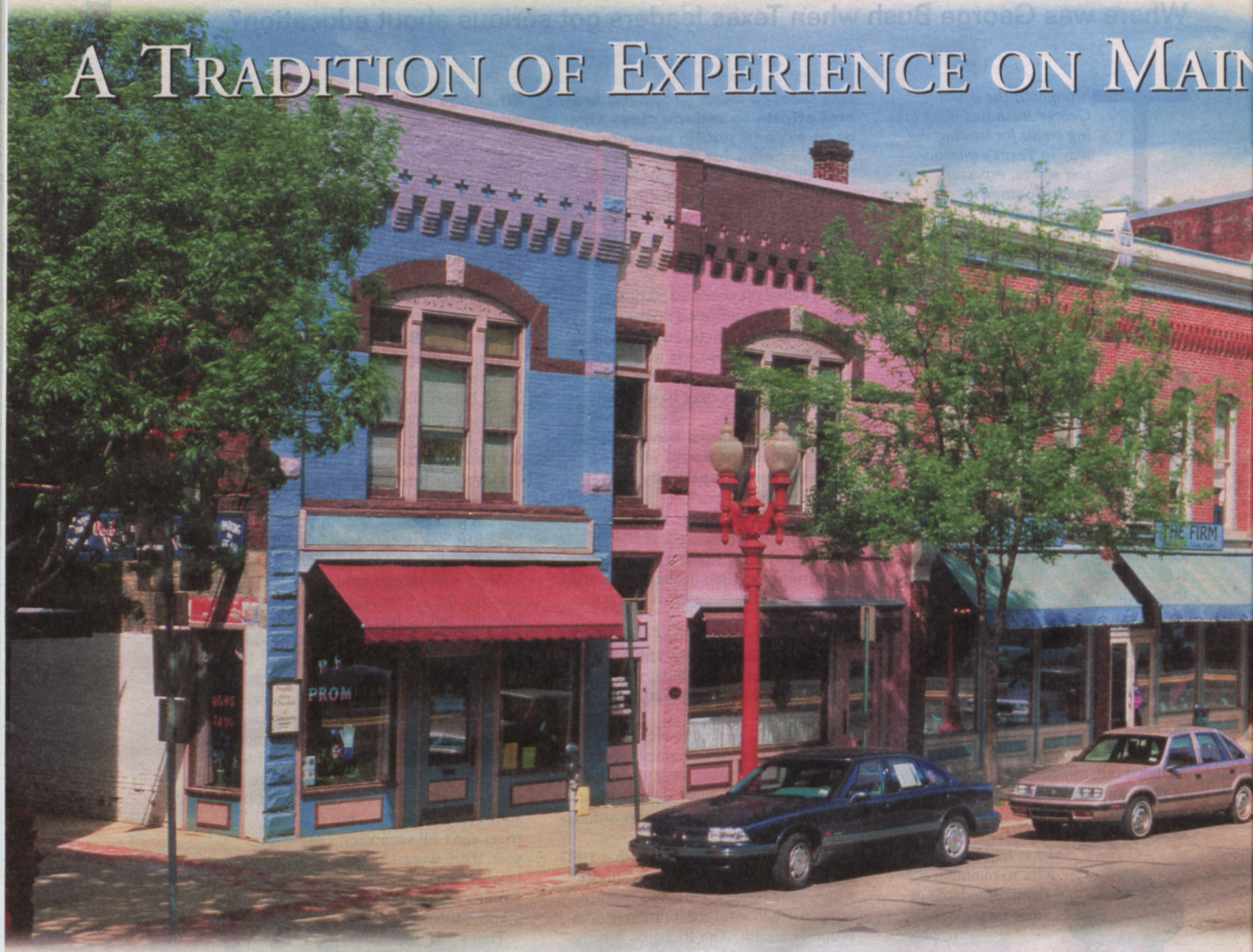
That's just not good for Texas children. ✔

—Alain Jehlen



Robert Neubecker

Introducing the new member-focused provider of **Security Benefit Group–**



THE NEA VALUEBUILDER® PROGRAM is pleased to announce that following an extensive review of numerous companies, the **Security Benefit Group of Companies** has been chosen as the Program's new exclusive provider.

For decades, Security Benefit has been providing innovative retirement products and services to educators across the country. Founded in America's heartland over 100 years ago, the company has been dedicated to helping men and women build financially secure futures.

A CLEAR CHOICE

There were many outstanding qualities that helped us determine that Security Benefit was the company we were looking for:

- A tradition of excellent customer service
- A deep pool of responsive representatives to provide members with retirement and financial education
- A rich heritage of innovation and creativity
- A rock solid financial foundation and risk management philosophy

Consistently ranked as having one of the best customer service programs in the country, Security Benefit is dedicated to providing the information you need to make important financial decisions. Your NEA Valuebuilder representative will be available to personally guide you through the process of planning for your retirement.

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The reason Security Benefit was chosen as the retirement specialist for NEA members is clear. In an increasingly sophisticated financial services industry, we believe NEA members deserve nothing less than unsurpassed service along with state-of-the-art investment expertise. Security Benefit provides both by blending its Main Street philosophy with a Wall Street experience to provide tremendous value for NEA members.

the NEA Valuebuilder Program –

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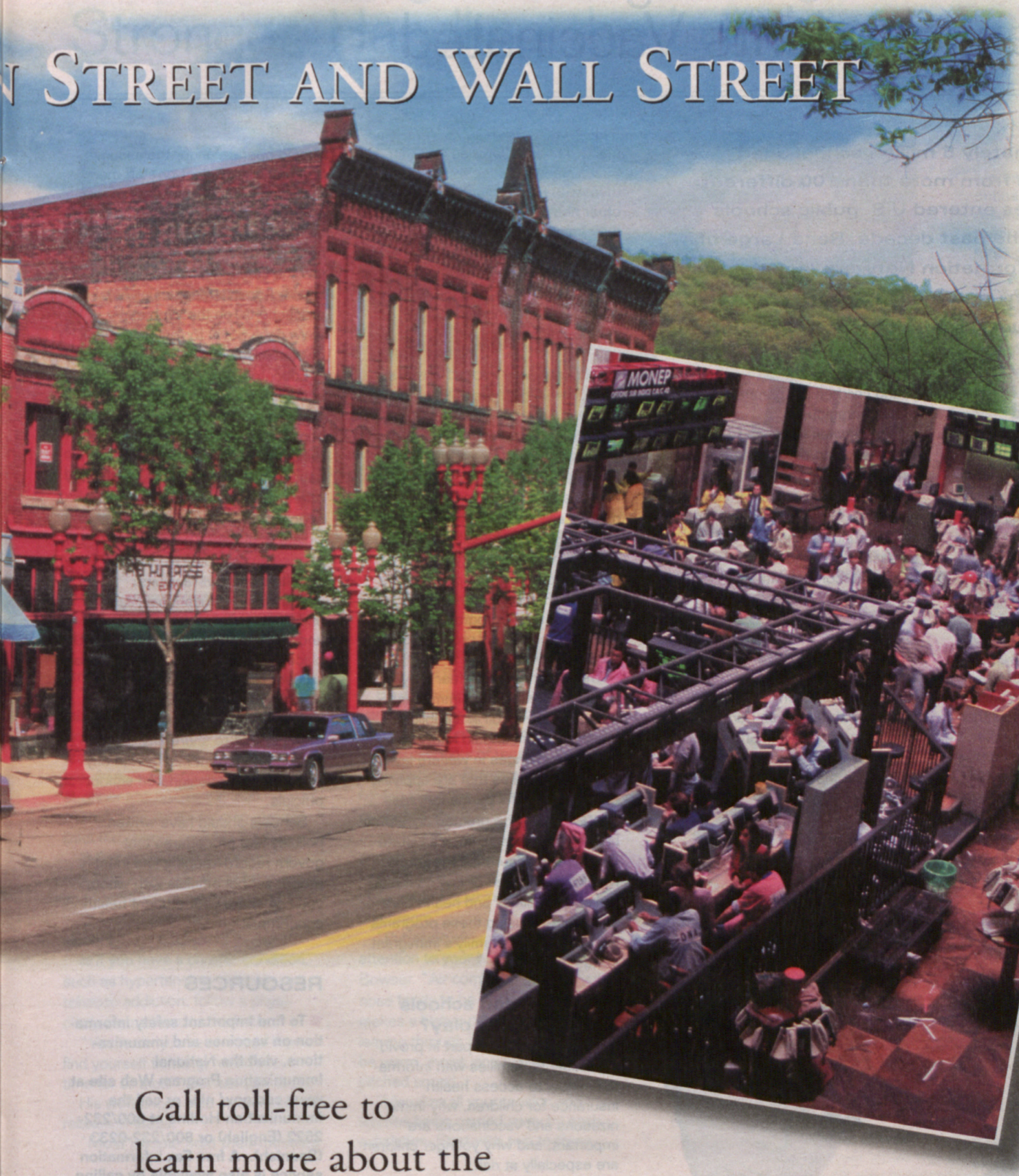

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VBNT1000

Take a Shot at Getting Immigrant Students Vaccinated

Approximately 5 million school-aged children from more than 100 different countries entered U.S. public schools during the past decade. Rena Large of the NEA Health Information Network looks at the risks these children—and their U.S.-born counterparts—face if all students aren't properly immunized.

Do children who've immigrated to the United States have special health concerns?

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, immigrant children and their families may have numerous health risks or conditions that are undiagnosed. Some may not have been immunized adequately. And in the case of international adoptees, they may arrive here without adults who can provide information about their medical history.

Immigrant elementary school children suffer from twice as much tooth decay in primary teeth as their U.S. counterparts.

Then do immigrant children pose a health risk for their classmates and school staff?

No. These children are more likely to have such diseases as Hepatitis B, parasitic diseases, and salmonella, which pose negligible risk to others, says Dr. Mark Sawyer of the University of California, San Diego, a specialist in pediatric infectious diseases.

Tuberculosis is a common concern in immigrating populations, but young children are generally not felt to be contagious.

In fact, when it comes to worrying about who can catch what from whom, the concern should run in the opposite direction: Immigrant children, who are less likely to be properly immunized, can contract diseases and conditions that they come into contact with upon entering the United States.

So it's the immigrant children themselves who are at risk?

Yes. These children can run into contact with American-born students who haven't been immunized. Both groups would risk contracting diseases that they could easily be vaccinated against.

Why aren't all children vaccinated and immunized?

For one, many working families, American-born and not, can't afford health insurance for their children.

Another reason is that many immigrant families fear that if they access services that provide them with free immunizations and other health care, they jeopardize their immigrant status.

Third, language and cultural barriers prevent some immigrant families from getting access to the regular health care they need, including immunizations.

Tammy Smith

Is there any good news?

Yes. State Child Health Insurance Programs are now available to provide free or low-cost health insurance for children in working families. These programs can provide regular doctor's exams, prescriptions, vaccinations and immunizations, and other urgent child health care needs.

Each state's eligibility requirements and enrollment process are different. Families interested in accessing these programs should contact their state's program office (see Resources).

Those families who fear they would jeopardize their immigrant status if they enroll in a public health program should know that, thanks to changes in welfare law, immigrant families that are applying to become lawful permanent residents can now be granted access to health care benefits such as State Child Health Insurance Programs, Medicaid, and free or low-cost medical care at clinics and health care centers. And using these programs will not change a family's immigrant status.

What role can schools and educators play?

Schools play a large part in providing students' families with information—how to access health insurance for children, why immunizations and vaccinations are important, and why younger children are especially at risk.

Schools also can help identify cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, and other commonly held values in their student populations and partner with community organizations to link their students and families with needed health services.

What should educators do if they fear a student's health puts them or others at risk?

All school employees should operate under the assumption that any student or staff member—and not just immigrant students—could have a communicable disease or condition, whether it's head lice, HIV, or chicken pox. Follow the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's universal precautions (on the Web at www.osha.gov/) to reduce the risk of transmission in school settings.

Educators shouldn't make assumptions about student health that can promote stereotypes and stigmas. Beyond the hurt and damage that such hearsay can cause to the student, what is said to others about a student's health or speculated health condition could violate a student's privacy and expose an educator to criminal penalties and civil lawsuits.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (also known as the Buckley Amendment) places certain privacy restrictions on student records maintained by schools that receive federal funds, including the written permission from parents to share any information about student health with anyone other than designated school officials.

Schools should have written policies and procedures that govern record-keeping and identify proper school officials with whom you can share your student health concerns.

RESOURCES

- **To find important safety information on vaccines and immunizations, visit the National Immunization Program Web site at www.cdc.gov/ nip/ or call the Immunization Hotline at 800/232-2522 (English) or 800/232-0233 (Spanish). A free Fax information service is also available by calling 888/CDC-FAXX and following the recorded instructions.**

- **To learn more about your state's free and low-cost health insurance program for children under the age of 18 who are members of working families, visit the Web at www.insurekidsnow.gov/ or call 877/KIDS-NOW.**

- **To obtain your copy of the American Academy of Pediatrics' policy statement "Health Care for Children of Immigrant Families," visit their Web site at www.aap.org/ policy/970702.html.**

Stress Management: Getting Stronger, Handling the Load

"For a lot of ESP, the biggest source of stress is not feeling appreciated," says Virginia Bailer, lunchroom manager at Section Elementary in Jackson County, Alabama.

Chris Pietsch

"A large number of people discount what we do," says Bailer, who has organized stress management workshops for support personnel in Alabama. "Lots of ESP feel as though they're at the bottom of the totem pole but working harder than anyone else."

Feeling unappreciated. Kids shouting on the bus. Reams of paperwork. Rushing students to the cafeteria.

Educators encounter a number of stress triggers every day.

To counter that, Philip Bowser (above), a district psychologist in Roseburg, Oregon, has conducted stress management workshops for bus drivers, helping them to "get stronger and handle the load."

That involves developing strong links throughout your life, such as:

- Eat moderately and exercise regularly, especially if you have anger and frustration to work off.
- Avoid "self-medicating" with alcohol.
- If you have a chronic condition, such as hypertension, diabetes, or tobacco addiction, follow a physician's instructions to the letter.

"You know you're stressed if you find yourself thinking, 'I don't have time for all that!'" Bowser points out.

His workshops also involve guided relaxation steps.

"Most people hold their muscles more tightly than necessary, which is both uncomfortable and a waste of energy reserves," says Bowser.

"Make a fist and notice how muscle tension has a tendency to travel from the point of origin to other muscle groups," he says. "For example, some people will also clench their jaw."

By alternately tensing and relaxing various muscle groups, one can begin to discriminate smaller and smaller amounts of tension. With a little practice—Bowser recommends having someone talk you through the procedure the first time—you can recognize tension in the early stages and let it go quickly.

Another relaxation technique: slow, deep breathing from the diaphragm.

"Put aside all worries and pay attention to your breathing," says Bowser. "Air coming in through your nose tends to be cool, dry, and makes a higher pitched sound. Air leaving through your mouth tends to be warm, moist, and makes a lower pitched sound.

"Visualize all your tension and worries being carried away by each exhalation. Start with two to three minutes and gradually work up to 15 to 20 minutes."

If stress is prolonged or excessive, a person should seek professional help. And all educators need to pay attention to their stress levels.

"When you're stressed, you do things like snap at the kids," says Bailer. "And kindness to the kids is the most important part of our jobs."

Easy Steps

1. Prioritize! Make sure the most important tasks get done, and then give up worrying about the rest.
2. Use your Association to make your voice heard. If you have input into working conditions and the decision-making process, you'll feel less stressed, even if the end result is far from ideal.
3. Celebrate your successes, no matter how small.
4. Interview for another job. Even if you don't switch, your current job will seem less stressful once you realize that you're not stuck.
5. Plan your life to take into account the stress load placed on you by work and family life.
6. Buy yourself flowers—they're cheaper than psychotherapy!

—Philip Bowser

Quick Tip

Joan Deguire North

Tom Kujawski

"Need a trick to help your body snap out of a stress attack?"

"Find a quiet place, sit down with a notepad, and write the answers to this question: 'What is the worst thing that could happen over this event?' You will usually see that your current situation is not the catastrophe you originally imagined.

"Then make a list of all the contributions you make at work or at home. This will help remind you of your value and give you the assurance that you can handle your problems."

Joan Deguire North is dean of the College of Professional Studies and a professor of education at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. She's taught courses in stress management, but she's also taken her share of aspirin products over her 33-year career.

NEA·HIN

From the **NEA Health Information Network**

■ Anti-Drug Education

The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign provides an online drug education resource with assorted classroom activities and reference tools geared toward educators with students between the ages of 11 and 14. The site also provides educators with insight into students' own thoughts and concerns on drug use. Visit www.teachersguide.org or call the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 800/788-2800 for additional anti-drug resources.

■ Program Planners

The "Community ToolBox: Resources for Local Health Program Planners," found on the Web at http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/, provides user-friendly "how-to" tools that explain how to accomplish the different tasks necessary for developing community health care programs. Sections online cover such topics as leadership, strategic planning, community assessment, advocacy, grant writing, and evaluation.

■ Cancer Education

NEA Health Information Network's Vivian Roy Bowser Cancer Education Fund provides small grants to state and local NEA affiliates to support small cancer education programs whose aim is to benefit school employees. For more information, call 800/718-8387 or visit www.neahin.org/breast-cervical/vrb.html.

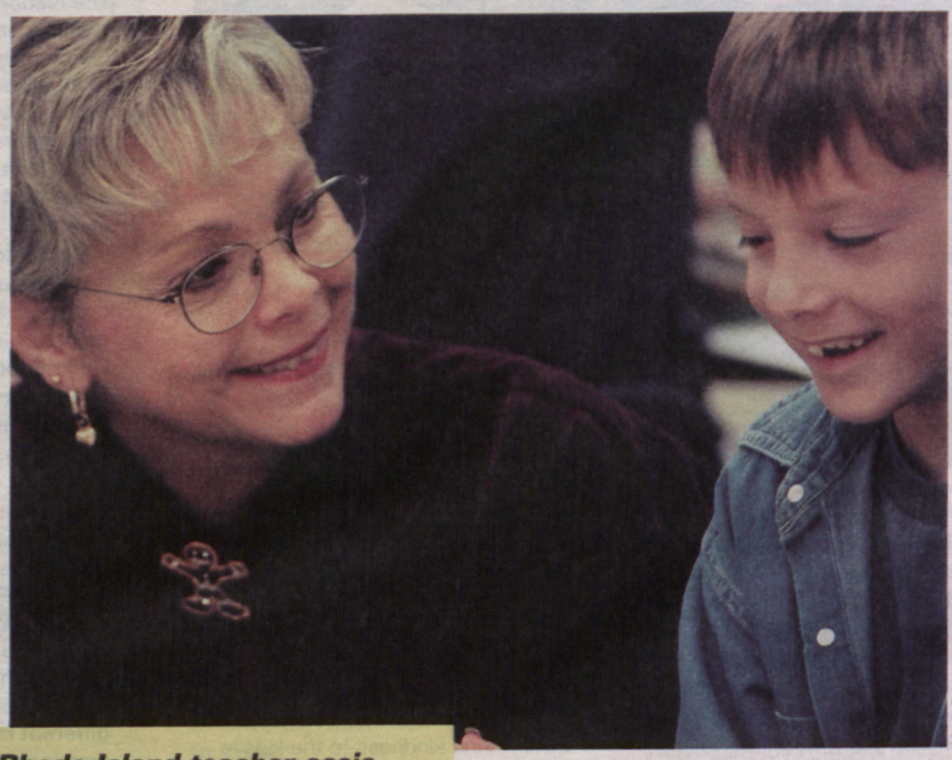
■ Workplace Health

Visit the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Web site for an extensive and comprehensive library of occupational health information (www.osha.gov/). The new OSHA Worker's Page (www.osha.gov/as/opa/worker/index.html) provides information regarding your rights and obligations, as well as information about your employer's rights and obligations. And it will even let you file a report online. For local assistance, check your telephone directory for OSHA regional or state offices under the government listings.

TEAMWORK

Rhode Island ESP Chart Career Path Through Certification

Teacher assistants get training on their way to being certified.



Kris Craig

Rhode Island teacher assistant Sandie Blankenship played a key role in developing training that leads to teacher assistant certification.

In Rhode Island, professional development for teacher assistants is everyone's business. Sandie Blankenship, an 11-year teacher assistant and NEA Rhode Island (NEARI) regional vice-president, is helping to see to that.

Six years ago, concerns about a misguided legislative proposal motivated her to persuade the bill's state senate sponsors to amend it. The legislation as finally passed required that any teacher assistant hired after January 1, 1999, possess a certificate. Teacher assistants who were employed as of that date were grandfathered in.

Blankenship's initial involvement led to her appointment to a Rhode Island Department of Education task force charged with defining the roles of teacher assistants and establishing the criteria for certificate training programs. The guidelines the task force came up with allowed school districts, as well as other public and private organizations, to create certificate preparation programs and submit them to RIDE for approval.

UniServ Director Jane Argentieri and Blankenship decided that NEARI should offer its own training program, both as a service to current members and as a way to connect prospective members to the Association. They found strong support from NEARI leadership, and in the fall of 1999 the first NEARI Teacher Assistant Certificate Program sessions began. The program was repeated last spring. In all, 110 Rhode Island teacher assistants have graduated from it so far.

The demanding program consists of 11 three-hour classes covering all aspects of the teacher assistant's job, including instructional, legal, health and safety, and technology issues. Trainers are drawn from all parts of NEARI's membership—ESP, teachers, nurses. Blankenship, a teacher assistant in a North Kingstown high school work-study program, co-teaches the opening class on "Collaboration and Team Building" with NEARI President Larry Purtill. Participants may miss only two classes and are required to keep a journal throughout the program.

Last year both sessions were full, and people were turned away. A number of nonmembers enrolled, even though the program fee for nonmembers is $150, compared with $25 for members. "If you offer people what they want, they'll come," observes Argentieri.

Blankenship isn't surprised that 90 percent of those enrolled so far have been veteran teacher assistants, who were exempted from the law's requirement that they earn a certificate. "ESP want to learn to do their jobs better, and to interact better with teachers," she says. Local associations in Rhode Island are now trying to negotiate stipends for those who have obtained their certificates.

RIDE Commissioner Peter McWalters is very excited by the response so far to the new teacher assistant certificate requirement. In addition to NEARI's, there are about 20 other training programs around the state. NEARI's training program continues this year, with two more sessions planned. Blankenship remains closely involved with it but will also be serving on another RIDE task force, this one charged with enhancing standards and training requirements for specific teacher assistant specialties, such as speech and language and ESL.

For more information about the Teacher Assistant Certificate Program, contact Sandie Blankenship or Jane Argentieri, NEA Rhode Island, 99 Bald Hill Rd., Cranston, RI 02920, 401/463-9630). E-mail: sanran@ids.net (Blankenship), jargentieri@nea.org (Argentieri). ✔

Going the Extra Mile

Joyce Tucker, a Title I aide at Owens Elementary School in Athens (Alabama), is this year's AEA-ESPO's Shining Star Award winner.

Tucker is a shining example of volunteerism at its best. Over the past 38 years, she has served as PTA president, cheerleader sponsor, public relations person, Boy Scout leader, School Advisory Council member, ESPO building representative, even the basketball coach.

"She has an outstanding ability to meet the students where they are and to try to bring them to the level where they need to be," says Principal Alvin Sheefield.

Hundreds of fuzzy bears comforted Buell Elementary school children following the shooting of classmate Kayla Rolland, thanks to the fundrais-

TEAM PLAYER

Past Experience Serves the Present

Name: **Evelyn Wilkinson**
Job Title: paraeducator
Experience: I'm familiar with the struggle some children have in the classroom. A childhood plagued by frequent ear infections, high absenteeism, and impaired hearing were serious obstacles for me, making learning a challenge.

But, with the help of concerned teachers, I made it over those bumps in the road and finished school. I now spend my days inspiring struggling students at Soap Lake Elementary, in Soap Lake, Washington.

If my day has been spent assisting a student in the process of learning, then my time has been well spent. I love to see the light turn on when a student grasps a concept, no matter how long or hard the struggle.

Washington Education Association

Evelyn Wilkinson understands her students' problems because she faced some of these obstacles as a child.

Special concerns: I helped develop the "Helping One Student To Succeed" (HOSTS) program 10 years ago. The program focuses on helping high-risk children in reading via one-on-one and small group tutoring sessions. In addition to working with the children, I train and recruit community volunteers, pull reading materials for the program and for classwork, and help teachers assess which students need additional assistance.

Other activities: I'm involved with various activities at school, including teaching math for Soap Lake's L.A.P students. In addition, I serve as an officer in our local P.S.E. Recently, I was recognized as Washington's ESP of the Year 2000. ✔

RESOURCES

The Pitfalls of Privatizing

Privatization is not and never will be an adequate substitute for good public management, claims economist Elliott D. Sclar in *You Don't Always Get What You Pay For: The Economics of Privatization.* Sclar, who teaches urban planning at Columbia University, offers well-documented examples of how poorly managed private-sector contracts often collide with important public values and interests. The result: costly mistakes at the taxpayers' expense.

Sclar cites, for example, the Metro-Dade Transit Agency experiment of the 1980s in which a private company was hired to run 10 of the system's bus routes. Complaints doubled, ridership plummeted, and the project was scrapped only 18 months later when managers discovered the new buses were so poorly maintained that only 10 of the 40 buses could be kept in service. $25 plus $3.50 s&h, from the Cornell University Press, CUP Services, P.O. Box 6525, Ithaca, NY 14851, 800/666-2211.

Child Care Examined

In 1960, 80 percent of mothers with preschool children did not work outside the home. By 1997 almost two-thirds had joined the workforce.What are the consequences for children and how should the public respond?

Research and education organization Public Agenda examines these issues and current policy debates in its new release *Necessary Compromises: How Parents, Employers, and Children's Advocates View Child Care Today*.

The report is an in-depth look at how parents, employers, and children's advocates view the various issues surrounding parental responsibility, employer's concerns, public policy, and societal values. The study is based on interviews with leading professionals and decision-makers, focus groups, mail surveys of employers and children's advocates, and a national random sample telephone survey of parents. $10 plus s&h. www.publicagenda.org.

Education: The Big Picture

The Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics offers a pocket-sized *Mini-Digest of Education Statistics 1999,* a compilation of statistical information covering American education from kindergarten through graduate school. Includes stats on the number of schools and colleges, teachers, enrollments, educational outcomes, federal funds for education, and more. Available online at nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/2000036.pdf.

ing efforts of **Sheila Thorn.** A secretary with Michigan's Beecher Secretarial/Clerical/Aides Unit, Thorn solicited $5 donations from local association members to support Beggin' for Bears, a Texas-based nonprofit that sends stuffed animals to kids in crisis.

"We collect money for domestic violence, for the needy, why not for this?" she says. As a result, a semi-truckload of 600 bears arrived the day children returned to class after the shooting.

"This is all about trying to make a child's life better, if only for a moment."

For teacher's aide **Annette Davis,** winner of this year's Ohio Education Association SSP Award, Veterans Day is celebrated year 'round.

Davis, with teaching colleague Valerie Kinney, helped build a $75,000 memorial park at Faircrest Memorial Junior High honoring veterans.

It took about two years to raise the money from school fundraisers and donations from veterans groups, the Rotary Club, and the community.

The school, named for one of nine district graduates killed in Vietnam, hosts annual Veterans Day observances and veteran recognition breakfasts, and conducts a two-week program on veterans every four years.

Debts getting a little scary?

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Pick up the phone and start taming your debts today.

Debt free in as little as 24 months‡

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Revolving Debt	$5,000	$4,319	$3,828
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Congratulations, you're debt free!

‡Based on a comparison of the minimum monthly payments (2% or $15, whichever is greater) of revolving debts versus an NEA Credit Plan personal loan with a fixed-payment and a 24 month term. Revolving debts calculated for six months at 6.9% Annual Percentage Rate (APR) and at 11.99% for the remainder of the 24 months. The illustration above is for an NEA Credit Plan personal loan calculated at 11.99%.

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†Your repayment term begins at the end of the 90-day deferral period. All payments are deferred for three months after the purchase date. Finance charges continue to accrue. You may prepay at any time without penalty.

The NEA Credit Plan personal loan has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew his/her membership that person and their family may no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates and fees offered through the NEA Credit Plan personal loan program. If eligible, a replacement loan may be offered. Any account opened in response to this offer will be governed by the laws of Delaware.

The NEA is not involved in the credit application process. All applications are subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America. The account is issued and administered by MBNA America Bank, N.A.

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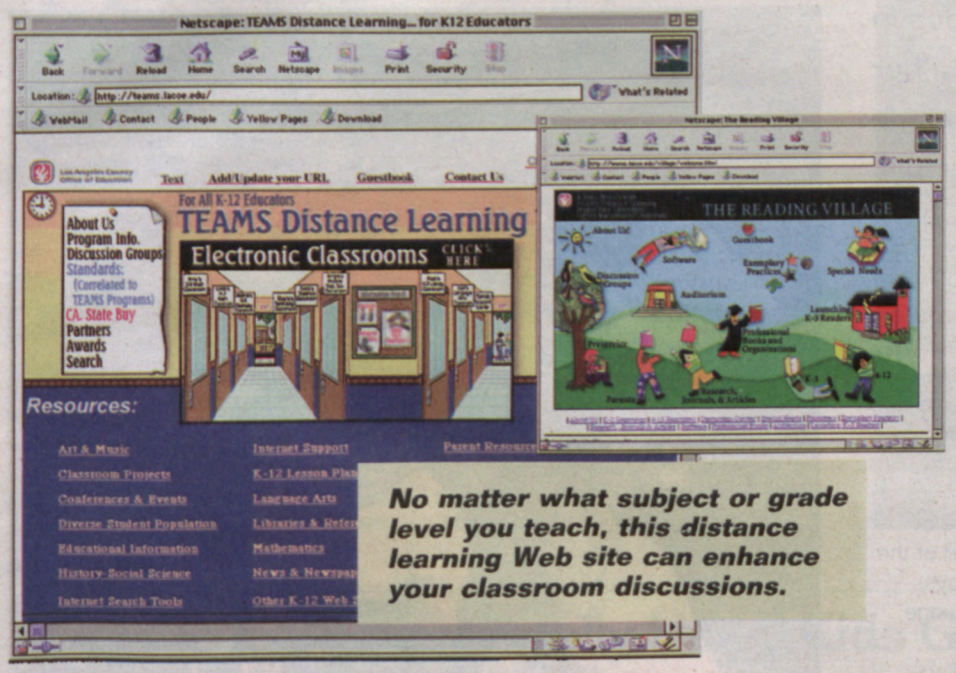
Going the Distance... Online



No matter what subject or grade level you teach, this distance learning Web site can enhance your classroom discussions.

Links Across the Country

I use TEAMS Distance Learning to enhance my math, science and history/social science program.

My students were able to benefit greatly in the areas of geometry and algebra.

Through active investigation, they improved their spatial understanding, discovered properties and relationships of two-and three-dimensional figures, and, most of all, developed algebraic thinking. The history/social science programs focus on geography, history, and media literacy.

This past year, my students were involved in the chemistry program. Their investigations included observing and describing the properties of matter, physical and chemical changes, rates of change, and using chemical tools to test the properties of matter.

Each program module has its own Web site within the TEAMS Distance Learning home page.

The students are able to participate in discussions groups with their peers across the country and the distance learning instructor.

Each module has a list of activities and software to extend their learning.

My students, through their participation in the "Student as Media Evaluator" module, were able to enter a "Make Your Own Commercial Contest," by applying strategies and techniques presented in the module. Their commercial won third place.

They also entered their commercials in the VIC (Video In the Classroom) Awards of the Los Angeles Unified School District, and won in the Language Arts category.

The TEAMS Distance Learning home page is http://teams.lacoe.edu.

Sharon Harrison
Fourth and fifth grade teacher
Los Angeles, California

Buddies from Down Under

My kindergarten class is taking part in the Travel Buddy program. We have exchanged stuffed toys with a kindergarten in Australia and are keeping a journal about the adventures of the toy they sent us.

The children are learning through E-mail what life is like in another country, while learning to communicate via computer.

In a few months, we'll return the animals along with their journals. The children love it and parents get involved by writing what their child dictates.

We found our Australian friends through www.epals.com.

Grace Morina
Kindergarten teacher
Paulsboro, New Jersey
Gracemorina@home.com

Demystifying Earthquakes

In my sixth grade classroom, we are studying earthquakes and plate tectonics.

Using the United States Geological Survey as a source, students are able to locate current earthquakes, their location in longitude and latitude, depth below earth's surface, magnitude, and exact time.

Maps show the area of the quake, color-coded for depth.

Lots of other information on earthquakes is also listed. The address is http://neic.usgs.gov/.

Another good place to start in the USGS Web site is www.usgs.gov/. The Earthquakes link leads to maps showing quakes that struck within the last day and even the last hour.

Richard Cox
Sixth grade teacher
Chillicothe, Ohio
Rcox@mail.gsn.k12.oh.us

Getting to Fluency

I designed a Web site for our foreign language department (French and Spanish). All four teachers in our department have added personal links to the main site. We also maintain sites on QUIA, which can be reached from our main Web site. Students love it!

Check us out at www.geocities.com/heightsfl.

Heather Elliott
French and English teacher
Arcadia, Indiana
helliott@mail.hhsc.k12.in.us

My favorite Web site

I've started a club on yahoo.com. There's a calendar, photo album, links, and message boards for students and their parents. I post our activities along with project due dates. Yahoo upgrades the site for you.

Sergio Rivas
TV Production teacher
Bethlehem, PA

TALK TO US

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail a description (under 200 words, please!) to wiredclassroom@list.nea.org.

Is there a Web site, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to myfavoritetech@list.nea.org.

Or send your responses by regular mail to *NEA Today*, or by Fax to 202/822-7206, or through the Web at www.nea.org/cet.

Those published here will receive a sparkling *NEA Today* mug!

Bytes for Beginners

I surf the Internet regularly and am worried about how much information is available about me. How can I protect my privacy?

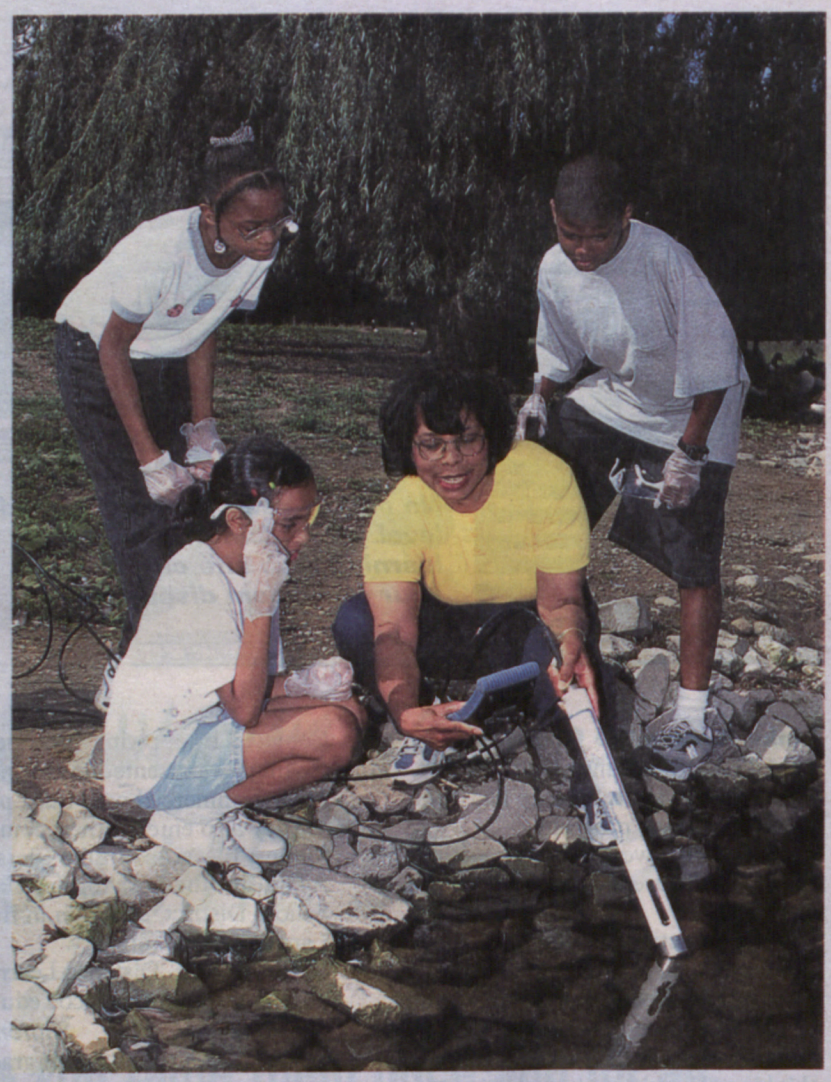
Here are two easy things you can do. First, if you subscribe to an online service like AOL, CompuServe, or Microsoft Network, check your online profile. Maybe when you first signed up, you thought it was a great idea to provide your full name and details about your interests.

Second, be careful when you fill out long forms of personal information, for example to register for Web sites. Many include a question near the end asking if it's OK if they share this information. Make sure you say they can't. The more places you put this information, the more chances that it will be misused. If you give them permission to "share this with a few of our select advertisers," it will most certainly be sold to companies that trade in identities and demographic information.

Even if you don't give them permission, do you really know if you can trust the people behind the Web page to respect that? Those names and addresses are valuable, especially if they can be tied to shopping or surfing habits. Before giving personal information, check out the site's privacy policy. Keep in mind, though, it's still really the honor system.

Wade in the Water

There's nothing dull about science in Sandra Brown's classroom. In her Earth's Oceans unit, kids get a chance to investigate the local water supply.



Tom Strickland

Sandra Brown's water quality testing project is but one example of the innovative work that earned her a 1999 Presidential Award for Math and Science.

Brown, a 30-year teaching veteran who currently teaches fifth grade science at Allisonville Elementary School in Indianapolis, Indiana, takes an inquiry-based, cross-curricular approach to teaching science in her Earth's Oceans unit.

Once a year, Brown's students, in collaboration with the Marion County health Department, test water at a local pond and creek. The unit also teaches students how to dissect sharks, prepare a hyperstudio presentation, and search the Internet for information about the ecosystem.

Working on the Earth's Oceans unit gives students valuable practice researching and building Web sites, preparing Power Point reports, and creating model aquifers. In small groups, students even design and construct under-sea settlements out of Legos and Z-sand. The unit culminates with a beach party in Brown's classroom.

"We use an integrated type of science unit where you pull all of the subjects together," Brown says. "Usually our focus is on language arts and math, but the Earth's Oceans unit brings in other disciplines and draws all of them together."

The Presidential Awards for Math and Science are administered by the National Science Foundation and given to 200 K-12 teachers each year. As one of this year's winners, Brown received a Presidential citation and a $7,500 grant. Under Brown's supervision, the money will be used to improve the quality of science instruction at Allisonville Elementary ✔.

Photos by Allen Litten

Here Kitty, There Kitty

"I got a $5,000 advance for my third book, and it went straight to the vet." With her needy pets always in mind, **Susan Smith** of Virginia's Shenandoah County is continuing to write inspirational children's books about youngsters and their pets.

Smith, the coordinator of media services for the Shenandoah County School District, has always been fond of animals. But it was during college that she began providing shelter for stray cats. One year, she took in 22 cats that she found on campus.

"They have a way of showing up when they need help," says Smith, an NEA member. "They just seem to find me."

Today, Smith cares for over 30 cats, some since 1985. They live in a small cottage, which she's turned into a feline sanctuary.

Her collection includes cats who are elderly, deaf, one-eyed, diabetic, three-legged, or who have balance problems.

Over the years, Smith has found cats in an assortment of unlikely places, for example, at the local fast food outlet or abandoned in the snow.

"Me?" Smith laughs when asked how she rooms with 30 cats. "The cats have their own house. I live with my mother."

The cats are the inspiration for Smith's books, which send realistic messages to kids about animals and life.

Unlike many children's authors, Smith believes children deserve to read about the sad things that happen to everyone. Her publishers have not always approved, but Smith insists upon writing stories that address real hardship.

"Books need to be more realistic, because every pet has to go to heaven sometime," Smith explains. "It helps kids feel better when they know sad things happen to other people, not just them."

Between her full-time job and caring for her cats, Smith continues to be inspired by her pets.

"My unfinished book, *Cat Children*, is about all my cats and their unique stories," Smith says. "I think taking in all these cats has made me a better writer and given me an urge to get my books out."

In the end, however, Smith admits that it's her simple love of cats that motivates her to spend most of her paycheck for their care.

"It hurts me to see those creatures suffering," Smith said. "I think that it's my calling to help these cats." ✔

How Can I Thank You? How 'bout a Porsche?

What do teachers often get that's shiny and red? You're thinking apple, right? But that's not the shiny, red object that Shasta (California) College instructor **Larry Lease** received a few months ago.

Lease, an accounting instructor of 19 years, had joked that if any of his students ever struck it rich, they could repay him with a Porsche. He never expected anyone to remember his offhand comment.

But one of his students from 14 years ago, Robert Sullivan, did remember. He gave Lease an "arena red" Porsche Boxster.

"He called me to do lunch," Lease recalls. "When we got to the parking lot, he handed me the keys and said, 'I always knew I was going to buy you that Porsche.'"

Lease hopes to encourage teachers with this story about a student who didn't forget a friend and teacher.

All the negative press teachers get, says Lease, can be discouraging.

"But periodically I get notes from students telling me what they're doing," he says, "and that's the most encouraging thing about my job."

What's next? "Since you already have a Porsche and you'll be old by the time I make it," one student quipped at the last graduation, "how about I get you a Winnebago?" ✔

California Teachers Association

In Iowa, Journalism Really Helps Kids Get Along

John Schultz

"I wanted to teach English to students who hated it," says Davenport Central High journalism teacher **Deb Buttleman Malcolm.** "I thought journalism was the best way to do this well. Journalism can establish the relevancy of other subjects."

In her effort to expand the borders of education, Malcolm has established the student-driven Journalism All Cultural Achievement Plan and Outreach Academy with mini-grants from the Journalism Education Association, NEA, and Opportunity Iowa.

This summer's 10-day outreach program focused on local Native American heritage. Students learned basic journalistic skills during the summer camp and became a tightly knit group as well, learning to appreciate and value their differences.

"We teach primary research skills, interviewing techniques, basic caption writing, and photography," explains Malcolm. "Children, especially English-as-a-second-language learners, thrive in the journalistic setting. Journalism teaches them that we are part of families. The journalism camp gives them a family. They take care of each other."

Malcolm's outreach programs have captured national awards from NEA and the Journalism Education Association for student impact.

"It's not a matter of making the students future journalists. It's about teaching them how to relate," Malcolm says. "We teach them to use their voices, not their fists, to stand up for themselves." ✔

Continuing a Family Tradition

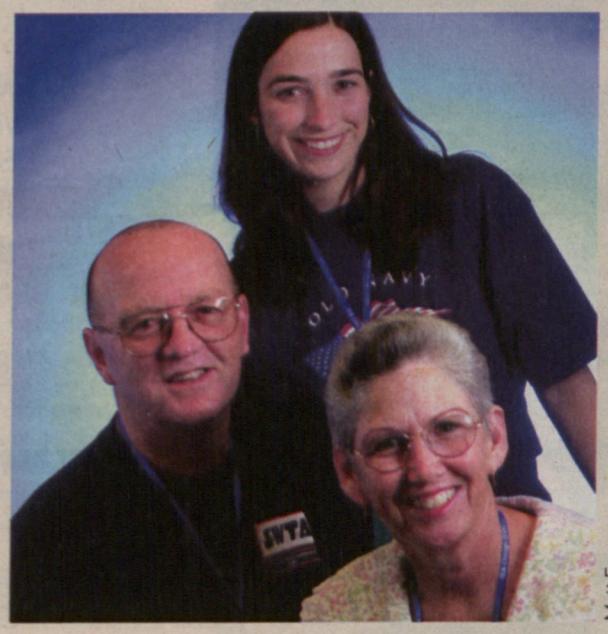
The Wood family is truly an Association family. For more than 25 years, **Merrill** and **Sara Wood** have served their NEA local affiliate, California's Southwest Teachers Association, in just about every capacity.

But nothing ever stays the same, and Merrill and Sara retired this fall. They've left behind a most precious asset to continue their Association work: their daughter **Laura**.

Laura, a fourth grade bilingual education teacher, has just begun her third year of teaching, but she's already a building rep, serves on her local's Executive Board, and last summer served as a delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly in Chicago.

Laura knows about activism. As a child she and her sister went to parents' night at her elementary school, while her parents did double duty in a parent/teacher conference and a picket line outside the school.

"We're leaving the Association in good hands," say her parents. "My parents have taught me well," adds Laura. "I would encourage all young teachers to get involved. ✔



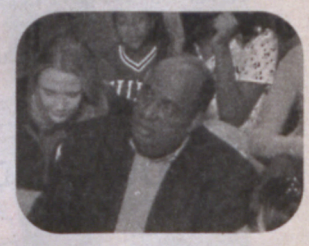
Matt Ferguson

See the world through their eyes.

Safe Passage

Voices from the Middle School

Court TV's **Catherine Crier** and *The Today Show*'s **Al Roker** will co-host this powerful one-hour special that shatters the myth that early adolescence is a safe and innocent time of life. The program will look at middle-school life from a kid's point of view, and offer real-life success stories to help kids survive these transitional years and what lies beyond.



choices AND CONSEQUENCES

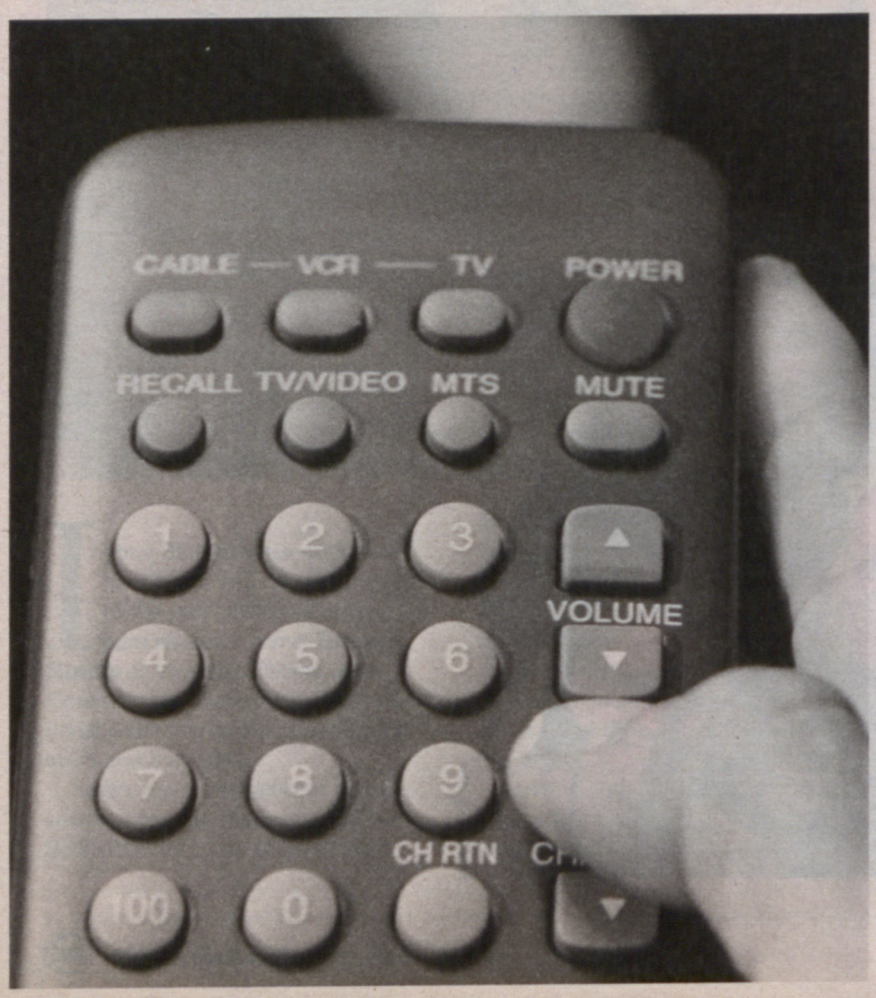
Tuesday, October 17, 2000, 12 Noon ET

Broadcast live and commercial-free from our nation's capital on Court TV and selected NBC affiliates across the country.

COURT TV

COURT TV *Two voices working to protect kids.* nea

WANT SAFER SCHOOLS? CHANGE THE CHANNEL.



The NEA's Safe School Now Network broadcasts are being used in schools across the country to improve school safety. Ask your media or AV person to record the series off the satellite and share the broadcasts with your school community.

Satellite test times begin at 1:45 pm ET.
Broadcasts air from 2:00-2:45 pm ET
on dates listed below.

November 16, 2000
"Violence-Related Stress: A Guide for School Staff"

February 1, 2001
"Addressing Bias and Hate in the School Setting."

March 22, 2001
"Building Skills to Manage Student Anger"

May 24, 2001
"Media Violence: Teaching Students Critical Viewing Skills."

For access information and satellite coordinates visit:

www.safeschoolsnow.org

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1201 16th Street, N.W. Washington, DC 20036 202-822-7746

Should Kids Work? Timing the Stock Market

Q: I think teenagers should work. My husband says he worked too hard as a kid and he doesn't want our two girls working. What do you think?

A: I'm with you. The first time I really thought about this question was 10 years ago when I was writing a story for *Money* magazine about how to teach your kids about money. I was pregnant at the time and so I was paying special attention.

We interviewed lots of people and one guy said: I don't see that my kids are going to learn anything from flipping hamburgers at McDonald's. I'd rather see them out having a good time.

It made me think about some of the jobs I'd done, planting and picking beans for 10 cents a pound, waitressing, washing dishes. What I learned was how to work hard and that employers are not always fair. I was hired to work in a bakery and the owner paid me less per hour each week for three or four weeks until I screamed about it.

Kids can't learn these kinds of lessons by sailing and water skiing, although having fun is certainly important, too. But all jobs have their drudgery. Mine does. I'm sure yours does too. How will our kids learn how to deal with that if they never do menial work?

I've worked with kids just out of college who felt they were ready to run the place. I don't want my kids to have that attitude when they start working. Being a parent isn't easy. But we do have to try to teach our kids the most important lessons we learned ourselves.

Q: I'm the executor of my mother's estate. What does that mean?

A: It means your mother chose you to carry out the provisions of her will. The person who makes the will is called the "testator." It's common to name a spouse or a child as executor. But sometimes the testator names a neutral expert like a bank trust department, an attorney, or a financial consultant.

Your first job as executor is to get the will probated. This means presenting it to probate court, which declares it valid.

Once you've done that, you are to administer the estate, which includes paying debts, taxes, and other expenses and, ultimately, settling the estate according to the terms of the will.

This is a big job. You must find all the assets, including pension benefits and other business termination agreements, and value those that don't have a ready value. You must collect appraisals for homes or other real estate and for valuables like art and jewelry. You must also file the final tax return for the decedent.

Most people don't even make wills. I'm guessing that because your mother made a will, she also probably talked to you about some of the details such as where she kept her life insurance policies and lists of other assets.

The best time to get started on these responsibilities is while the estate owner is still alive. It's wise to ask him or her to make a list of assets with their location and to ask about disposal of personal property that's not itemized in the will.

Q: What's the best day to buy stocks?

A: I've been getting this question a lot lately, and it delights me because it shows how sophisticated investors have become. What you are doing when you put a specific amount of money into the market at regular intervals is called dollar cost averaging. That is the very best way for most investors to get started.

Studies show that investors who make regular investments, preferably once a month like you do, buy more shares of a stock when the market is down, fewer when it is up.

If the stock mutual fund you invest in is selling at $25 a share, you buy four shares that month; at $20 you buy five shares. Over time, this strategy works extremely well.

But your question is specifically about timing. It seems to you—and to many people who start using this strategy—that they end up buying at the high for the month.

It may seem that you're unlucky in the purchase price because you are watching the fund so closely and you notice that there are other times during the month when it trades lower.

But give it time. Studies show that getting the absolute low of a month isn't that important over time. It's the regular, disciplined investing that makes the difference.

— Mary Rowland

Rowland is an author and contributor to several financial planning magazines.

Thrifty Educator

This month's tips come from Amy Graff, graff.graff@massed.net, a first, second, and third grade special educator at the Stapleton School in Framingham, Massachusetts, and from Verlee Owens, rvowens@willinet.net, a special education and English teacher at West High School in Sioux City, Iowa.

Graff: "I incorporate many academic areas into my lessons by studying plants. We grow them from cuttings, seeds, and bulbs. We start at the beginning of the year and hold a Mother's Day plant sale in May. Students compare the plants' growth rates and record observations in their writing journals. They sell the plants, so collecting money and making change become part of the project. They calculate how much was spent on supplies and how much profit was made. We buy books for the school library with the proceeds."

Owens: "Your chamber of commerce and state tourism office may offer wonderful, free teaching resources. They usually have books, maps, and brochures available in classroom sets. Use them across the curriculum and grade levels, to encourage creative writing, improve map skills, and practice skimming/scanning for information."

If you have a favorite money-saving tip that you apply in your workplace, please send your idea along to neatoday@nea.org.

FACTOID

91% of all NEA insurance enrollment forms were approved in 1999.

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

The NEA Valuebuilder Program is an outstanding way to prepare for your retirement, and NEA Member Benefits has selected a new company to administer the program, the Security Benefit Group.

Security Benefit maintains an extensive network of independent financial advisors, and as many as 500 agents will be working with NEA members. NEA Member Benefits also plans to develop a qualified tax-deferred mutual fund 403(b)(7) program, an after-tax mutual fund program, and a retirement rollover product.

Questions? Just call 1-800-637-4636, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET. Or visit www.neamb.com.

NEA Member Benefits can save you money on magazines with the NEA Magazine Service Program, administered by American Collegiate Marketing. You can select from over 500 titles at up to 80 percent off the cover price.

All orders carry a triple guarantee: guaranteed savings (the service will match price if you find a lower intro rate on any ordered magazine), guaranteed quality (a refund for all undelivered issues if not satisfied), and guaranteed service (the service will do whatever it takes to make you happy).

The service also offers a monthly consolidated account statement with information on all your subscriptions, advance notice of publishers' price changes, and expiration dates. You can also change your address for all magazines, regardless of where ordered.

To order, visit www.neamb.com or call toll-free 1-800-YOURMAG.

Lessons Learned Abroad

New Zealand's decade-long school reform efforts offer lessons for the United States.

WHEN SCHOOLS COMPETE: A CAUTIONARY TALE
By **Edward B. Fiske** and **Helen F. Ladd**
Brookings Institute Press
$18.95

The debate over how to improve America's public schools is long and vigorous. Choice, competition, vouchers, and charter schools top the laundry list of reform ideas proposed by many. But do they work?

This book attempts to answer. Its authors, Edward Fiske, a longtime education editor at the *New York Times*, and his wife, Helen Ladd, a professor of public policy and economics at Duke University, examine a decade-long education reform effort in New Zealand, the largest and longest experiment with self-governing schools operating in a competitive environment.

In 1989, New Zealand embarked on what is arguably the most radical overhaul of a state education system ever undertaken by an industrialized country. The government abolished the national department of education and turned over control of the country's nearly 2,700 primary and secondary schools to locally elected boards of trustees, controlled by parents. This series of reforms was called Tomorrow's Schools.

Two years later, in 1991, a newly elected government abolished neighborhood enrollment zones and committed to free-market principles, giving parents the right to choose which school their children would attend.

Interested in this large-scale reform, Fiske and Ladd spent five months of 1998 visiting New Zealand schools, analyzing data and interviewing teachers, school administrators, parents and policy-makers. They were particularly interested because New Zealand has roughly the same population as an American state, and it has similar social, cultural and political traditions as the United States, as well as a similar minority population.

The reform has provided a laboratory for self-governing schools and parental choice—ideas that underlie the current interest in voucher experiments and charter schools in America. The book details both the successes and failures of this experiment, providing invaluable insights and lessons learned for all who are interested in improving public schools.

The authors found that while New Zealanders clearly enjoy the empowerment of self-governance, operational freedom, and parental choice, several negative consequences emerged. The biggest? Senior education officials conceded to the authors that the system of self-governing schools in a competitive marketplace did not work for 10 to 30 percent of the schools.

"The promotion of a competitive educational environment assumes that some schools will be successful and others unsuccessful," write the authors. "Is it desirable to reform a state educational system in such a way that you know from the outset that some schools—and more important, the students in them—will find themselves in a worse situation than before?"

While some schools and students actually did benefit from the reform efforts, many did not—particularly minority and low-income students. The authors found a dramatic increase in polarized school enrollment patterns by race and ethnicity.

Schools deemed to be high quality, based on the socioeconomic and racial mix of its students, quickly became oversubscribed. They were then allowed to set their own admissions criteria, virtually hand-picking the more affluent and high-achieving students.

Meanwhile, minority students became increasingly concentrated in schools serving high proportions of minority and low-income students. Their choices were extremely limited.

"The problems of schools serving concentrations of disadvantaged students will not be solved by school autonomy and parental choice," write the authors. Instead, they advise, policy-makers would be wise to address more directly the challenges of teaching and learning in such schools. ✔

EXCERPT

"The concept of an educational marketplace presumes that some competitors will succeed and others will fail...New Zealand's experience with Tomorrow's Schools thus raises the question of whether it is appropriate, practically as well as morally, to organize public education in such a way that, when the system is operating the way it is designed to function, there will be failures as well as successes among both institutions and individuals."

TVTIPS

Napoleon

PBS, Wednesdays, November 8 and 15, Check Local Listings

Director David Grubin takes his audience from Napoleon's Corsican birth to his exile in St. Helen in this four-part documentary featuring international historians, original footage of what was once Napoleon's empire, and quotations from Napoleon's writings. For more information, contact the Fisher Company Press Contact at 914/6734-6164. ✔

The Microchip Caper

By Robert Graham
Eleven-year-old Julie and her twelve-year-old brother Todd have sailed from California to Hawaii with their parents in search of fun and relaxation. What they find, however, is an adventure aboard a mysterious boat loaded with boxes full of computer parts! For children ages eight to eleven. 114 pp., $4.95 plus $4 s&h from Island Heritage Publishing, 99880 Iwaena, Aiea, HI 96701, 800/468-2800.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

The Discipline Checklist

Got a student discipline problem? How would you like to consult with dozens of your colleagues without getting up from your desk? This checklist lets you do just that. Sixty elementary teachers—each recognized for highly successful efforts at maintaining discipline—share their secrets of classroom management and suggestions for motivating today's students. Practical and easy to read. $4.50 from the NEA Professional Library. 800/229-4200, on the Web at www.nea.org/books.

Slave Labor in China?

A new National Labor Committee report about modern indentured servitude exposes the substandard working conditions of Wal-Mart's sweatshop workers. Titled *Made in China: The Role of U.S. Companies in Denying Human and Worker Rights*, this report is available online at www.nlcnet.org, or request a hard copy from NLC, 275 Seventh Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10001, 212/242-3002.

All American Girls

What do Golda Meir, Lauryn Hill, and Mia Hamm all have in common? They're all featured in Girls Who Rocked the World 2, a collection of stories about women who made their marks on the world before the age of 20. Also included are photos and writings of 30 young American girls who have their own plans to rock the world. $8.95 from Beyond Words Publishing, Inc. 20827 NW Cornell Road, Suite 500, Hillsboro, OR 97124, 800/284-9673 or visit www.beyondword.com.

Daily Creativity

The memories of childhood are precious and now there is a way to preserve them! My Days...My Writings is a daily journal for 6- to 9-year-olds, intended to provoke young writers to identify and describe the thoughts, feelings, and events that are important to them here and now. A sort of time capsule, each daily entry has a writing prompt, such as "What is something you will never say to your own children?" or "Tell 2 things you know about Abraham Lincoln." Kids will enjoy the activity of daily writing and can look back at their thoughts years from now. $9.99 plus $5 s&h from G&R Publishing, Waverly, IA, 800/383-1679.

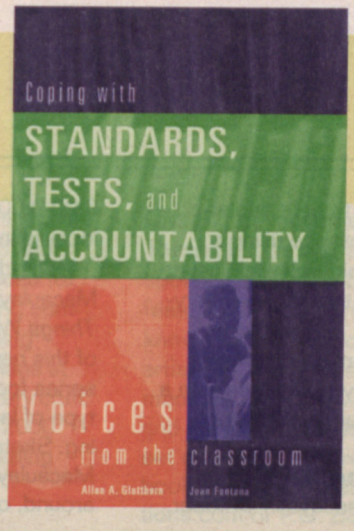
IEP Help

Students with special needs often require an individualized education program, but writing and implementing such a plan requires teamwork. The Department of Education wants to be part of that effort! A Guide to the Individualized Education Program is a free guide intended to assist parents, teachers, and other school staff in creating an effective IEP for each student's unique needs. Available in alternate format (Braille, audio, large print). Free from Editorial Publications Center, U.S. Department of Education, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794, 877/4-ED-PUBS. Also available online at www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS.

Math on the Menu

Running a restaurant means using real-life math skills and Math on the Menu: Real Life Problem Solving for Grades 3-5 takes children through a learning adventure.

Students must help the Rosada family start a Mexican family restaurant, taking care of details from designing the restaurant layout to creating food combinations. $16 from the Regents of the University of California, Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720, 510/642-7771 or visit www.lhs.berkeley.edu/GEMS.



EXCERPT

Unlike most educational innovations, standards are here to stay. As Fontana notes, they have been with us in different guises for many years. And the continuing pressure for better student achievement will likely sustain them for many years to come. Teachers can cope in many effective ways:

- Analyze the high stakes tests to determine which standards and their related benchmarks are likely to be tested.
- Decide which mastery units you can adapt or develop.The mastery units will incorporate the mastery benchmarks.
- Build a yearly (or semester) schedule, listing the titles of the mastery units and indicating how much time they will take.

NEW from the NEA Professional Library

Coping with Standards, Tests, and Accountability Voices from the Classroom

Allan A. Glatthorn and Jean Fontana
144 pp., $14.95
#2015-4-00-FN

No trend in current American education can be as baffling or polarizing as the standards movement.

How to raise test scores, improve student performance, and evaluate teachers are issues hotly debated in nearly every community.

In 12 well-referenced chapters, teachers, teacher educators, and administrators share their views on and experiences with accountability, testing, and standards programs in states and school districts throughout the nation.

For more information, call 800-229-4200, or check the Web at www.nea.org/books.

BOOKS by NEA Members

In Your Face: Words of Encouragement for Youth

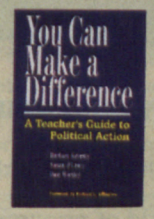
The ABCs of it...
By Rita G. Giles
Teenagers often have difficulty expressing themselves to their parents and peers and that can result in harsh words and angry feelings. *In Your Face* helps teens communicate effectively and fight through adversity to lead productive, peaceful lives. This book can help parents gain insight into the life of their teenager. 125 pp., $9.95 plus $1.75 s&h from GiRo Consulting Company, P.O. Box 8961, Falls Church, VA 22041.

My Personal Spanish/English Phrase Book

By Richard Simonson
This handy phrase book lists hundreds of idiomatic expressions useful for teaching any grade level. Includes workbook pages to help you improve your skills and space to jot down your own day-to-day words. A photocopier-friendly version and renewable copy license is also available for Spanish teachers. 29 pp. $11.47 plus $2.90 s&h from Richard L. Simonson, P.O. Box 7198, Page, AZ, 86040, 520/608-0299. Photocopy version: $67 plus $8 s&h.

They Called Me Teacher

Stories of Minnesota Country School Teachers and Students from 1915 to 1960
By Tom Melchior
This book holds the stories of country school teachers recounting anecdotes of the bygone era. A type of "teacher-genealogy," the tales tell of dedication, hard work, the human spirit, and passion for the noble profession of teaching. 267 pp., $19.95 plus $4.30 s&h from Melchior Publishing, 1901 West 125th St., Shakopee, MN 55379, 612/445-4109.



You Can Make a Difference

A Teacher's Guide to Political Action
By Barbara Keresty, Susan O'Leary, and Dale Worthy
You Can Make a Difference tells the inspirational and instructional story of how three teachers turned activists banded together to save their Reading Recovery from budget cuts. Their shared insights and suggestions help readers explore a grassroots program for political action. 88 pp., $14 from Heinemann Publishing, 361 Hanover Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801.

TV TIPS

Pelswick
Nickelodeon, Tuesdays at 8:00 p.m. ET, beginning October 24, check local listings.

This new animated series features the adventures of a typical 13-year-old boy, who happens to be a quadriplegic. Despite using a wheelchair, Pelswick insists on being treated like everyone else, and he faces adolescent predicaments and family challenges with a unique sense of humor.

Building Big
PBS, Tuesdays in October, 8:00-9:00 p.m. ET, check local listings.

Hosted by David Macaulay, author of *The Way Things Work*, each episode of this new five-part miniseries focuses on a different type of large-scale engineering. Sketchbook in hand, Macaulay scrambles up, around, over, and through

bridges, domes, skyscrapers, dams, and tunnels, explaining the principles behind each type of construction. Interactive workshops and educational materials are available at www.pbs.org/buildingbig.

CNN Newsroom
CNN, Weekdays, 4:30-5:00 a.m. ET, check local listings.

Created for classroom use, CNN Newsroom incorporates special reports with daily news. On Mondays in October "Vikings" will investigate these Scandinavians and how they lived, and profile Gunner Marel Eggerston, who intends to recreate Eriksson's journey. Also this month, "The Electoral Process" airs on October 24, and in a week-long series beginning October 2, "The Faces of a Hero" explores definitions from mythology and literature and looks at modern heroes. For more information, or to sign up to receive classroom guides and programming information by E-mail, visit www.turnerlearning.com.

Safe Passage: Voices From the Middle School
Court TV, October 17, 12:00-1:00 p.m. ET, check local listings.

Airing live from Washington, D.C., this one-hour special raises awareness of the challenges faced by teens by looking at middle school from their perspective. How to handle conflict and peer pressure while developing a resilient nature is examined, along with ways schools and communities can be made safer for kids. "Reality Check" will allow viewers to compare their awareness of teen behavior with what teens themselves report.

The Hound of the Baskervilles
Odyssey, October 1, 8:00-10:00 p.m. ET, check local listings.

Sir Henry Baskerville returns to his ancestral home after his uncle suffers a mysterious death, and while many in the village believe his death was the result of a Baskerville family curse,

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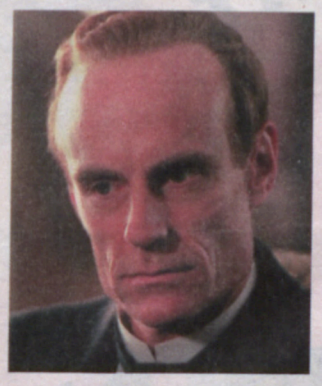


Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson hurry to sort through the suspects and save Sir Henry from an untimely death. KIDSNET is producing free educator guides designed for high school English teachers. Visit www.kidsnet.org for more information.

Cora Unashamed—Masterpiece Theatre's American Collection

PBS, October 25, 9:00-11:00 p.m. ET, check local listings.

Based on the story by Langston Hughes, this film tells of Cora, a member of the only African-American family living in a small Iowa town during the Depression. After Cora's young daughter dies, her affection nurtures Jessie Studevant, her employers' daughter. When Jessie becomes pregnant, Mrs. Studevant takes steps that have tragic consequences, and Cora's devotion to the girl empowers her to speak the truth—at great personal cost. Also airing on October 8, 15, and 22 is the three-part adaptation of Charles Dickens's classic, *Oliver Twist*. Support materials are available at www.pbs.org and through NCTE at www.ncte.org.

Animated Epics—Don Quixote

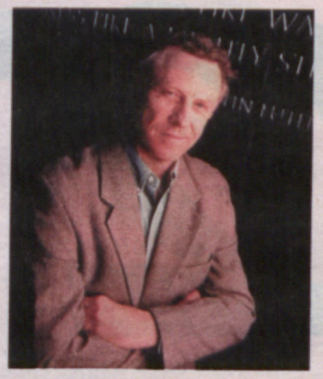
HBO, October 9, 7:30-8:00 p.m. ET, check local listings.

This animated presentation features Miguel de Cervantes's tale of the knight-errant, Don Quixote de la Mancha. Accompanied by his squire, Sancho Panza, he embarks on a quest to right the wrongs of the world.

Hate.com: Extremists On the Internet

HBO, October 23, 10:00 p.m. ET, check local listings.

The politics of hate groups, how their leaders recruit online, and the connection between these groups and recent acts of violence are examined in this



investigation of how hate groups grow through the Internet. In conjunction with this presentation, HBO is developing a cyber-campaign, "Hate Hurts," to share ways to develop empathy and promote tolerance.

TCM By The Book—Lives on Film

October 1-6, 6:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. ET, check local listings.

Intended to motivate students to read and develop a passion for literature, offerings in October include films based on biographies of Madame Curie, Louis Pasteur, Vincent Van Gogh, and others. *TCM By The Book* offers taping rights for one year from air date on selected programs and free support materials. Visit www.turnerlearning.com for more information.

Assignment Discovery—Earth Science, Life Science, Energy & Health

Discovery Channel, weekdays, 9:00-10:00 a.m. ET, check local listings.

Four week-long series on science and health debut in October, beginning with *Energy*, which includes programs on sound, matter, fire, physics, and magnetism. *Health* follows, with smoking, weight, brains, bones, and puberty explored, and *Earth Science* and *Life Science* are the focus of the third and fourth weeks. Produced for grades 7-12 and airing commercial-free with taping rights. Find lesson plans at http://school.discovery.com, and request the Fall 2000 Educator Guide by calling 888-892-3484.

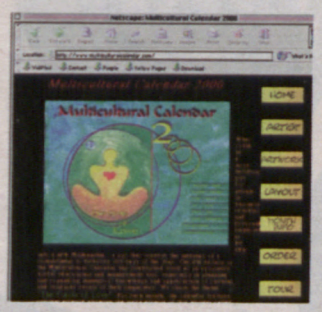
FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Gender Equity Trends

Do boys use computers more often than girls? Do girls fear being subjected to a crime while at school more than boys do? Are men or women more active in the labor force? The National Center for Education Statistics addresses these and other gender issues in *Trends in Educational Equity of Girls & Women*. For a free copy, write to the U.S. Department of Education, Ed Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794. Or call 877/4ED-Pubs.

Multicultural Holidays

Celebrate diversity with the multicultural calendar, a guide to holidays observed in



dozens of countries. Created by Indian artist Sheena Singh, the calendar features unique artwork and lists holidays by country and religion. Useful for any diverse workplace, the multicultural calendar is used by school districts as well as big name organizations like Johns Hopkins, Bank of America, and Cigna. To order, or for more information about the art, artist, and layout, visit www.multiculturalcalendar.com.

History in Pictures

If a picture is worth a thousand words, five posters can tell a century of history. Now available from the Philadelphia Museum of Art's collection are five posters created by African-American artists chronicling events from the Civil War to the Civil Rights movement. These posters and a corresponding resource book feature the work of both known and anonymous artists focusing on such mediums as pottery, quilts, and portraits. $39.95 for the set of posters and resource book at www.crystalproductions.com or P.O. Box 2159, Glenview, IL 60025.

For the Curious Educator

In the era of computer technology, teachers are struggling to keep up with their Web-surfing students. What happens if a student comes to you with a computer question that you can't answer? Fear not. Inquiring *Educators Want to Know*, co-written by NEA member Kathleen Schrock, shows how to integrate technology into lesson plans and answers not-so-basic questions on computers and the Internet. $39.95 plus shipping and handling. Visit http://discoveryschool.com/schrockguide/books2.html.

Creative Science

Albert Einstein nearly flunked school while developing his creative genius. Now you can encourage your students' creativity with Dr. Zondra Knapp's *Super Invention Fair Projects*. This book shows the step-by-step creation of a scientist from making an inventor's log to previous invention-fair projects. This book features big type and fun illustrations for younger students. $9.95 from NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group, 4255 West Touhy Avenue, Lincolnwood, IL, 60646, 847/679-5500, fax 847/679-2494.

Portfolios Made Easy

Teachers who agonize over what is most appropriate for student portfolios will find a helping hand in The Portfolio Organizer. Written after a decade of research into portfolio design, this book includes design tips, ideas for learning samples, peer evaluation sheets, and other ways to make a portfolio exciting and unique. $24.95 from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1703 N. Beauregard Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22311, 800/933-2723, online at www.ascd.org.

Athletic Inspiration

Rated as one of the top 10 athletes of the 20th century, gold medal Olympian Babe Didrickson excelled in running, jumping, javelin throwing, swimming, basketball, tennis, golf, and baseball. Her biography, written by Susan E. Cayleff and nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, describes the blossoming of Didrickson from tomboy in Texas to international star. $8.95 from Conrari Press, 2550 Ninth Street, Suite 101, Berkeley, CA 94710, 800/685-9595.

Fun After Class

From classic games to zany new crafts, *60 Super Simple After-School Activities* will

provide hours of entertainment for the young mind. This book includes ideas for scrapbooks and puzzles, simple recipes, as well as individual and group games. $6.95 from Lowell House, a division of NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group, 4255 Touhy Avenue, Lincolnwood, IL 60646, 800/679-5500.

Frightening Food

Halloween fans will love scaring their friends with recipes from *Gruesome*

Grub and Disgusting Dishes. This easy-to-follow cookbook includes everything from hot and cold foods to dessert and drinks. Students are sure to enjoy the gruesome fun of cooking everything from fingers and aliens to spiders and bats. $6.95 from Lowell House, a division of NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group, 4255 Touhy Avenue, Lincolnwood, IL 60646, 800/679-5500.

Women Changing the World

The latest additions to the *Women Changing the World* series, *Ela Bhatt: Uniting Women in India* and

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**All other bank APYs shown are valid as of 8/2/00, based on a $2,500 minimum opening deposit and a term of 12 months. Source – *Informa Financial Information, Inc.*, 8/2/00.

†Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children.
The NEA Deposit Program has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew membership, that person and his/her family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates through the NEA Deposit Program. If eligible, a replacement account will be offered.

Absolutely no membership dues are used to market this program.

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Mamphela Ramphele: Challenging Apartheid in South Africa, takes us through the struggles and triumphs of two contemporary women who are helping to change the world. $19.95 each, from The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 365 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

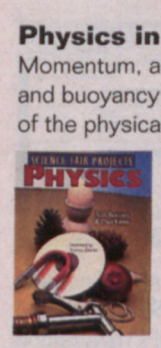
Slimy, Smelly Science

Sense experimentation takes an exciting turn with *Shocking, Slimy, Stinky, Shiny Science Experiments.*

Using sight, touch, and smell, students can perform simple experiments to learn about light and electricity as well as things that are slimy or smelly. $12.95 from Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016.

Physics in Practice

Momentum, amplification, and buoyancy are just some of the physical properties explored by *Science Fair Projects: Physics.*



These practical experiments show students how everyday items such as guitars, popcorn, and light bulbs work. $9.95 from Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016.

Human Rights Watch

Global Village or Global Pillage? is a video documentary that discusses ways to raise the accountability of multinational corporations to the issues of human rights and providing a livable wage. Available for $25, or $10 for students and those with low incomes from the National Labor Committee and Preamble Center, World Economy Project, 1737 21st NW, Washington, DC 20009. 202/265-3262 x330, fax 202/234-0981, E-mail wep@preamble.org.

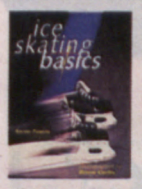
Surfing the Web

Want to use the World Wide Web to enliven the classroom, but aren't sure where to begin? *The Educator's*

Guide to the Internet will have you surfing the Web in no time flat! This easy-to-use handbook starts with the very basics and introduces you to the amazing resources available to educators online. Learn how to subscribe to electronic interest groups, download files, browse the multimedia net, or just send E-mail. $14.95 plus $2 s&h from Pearson Education Order Department, PO Box 11073, Des Moines, IA 50336, 800/848-9500.

Ice Skate Like a Pro

Learning to ice skate doesn't have to leave you black and blue. *Ice Skating Basics* can



send you gliding across the ice with ease and grace. Color photographs complement chapters on such topics as skate fit and purchase, basic moves for adults and for children, and lessons on skating backwards. $12.95 plus s&h from Sterling Publishing Co., Inc. 387 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016.

Closing the Education Gap

In his controversial new book

Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America, noted linguistics professor John H. McWhorter argues that the powerful influence of the "cult of separatism" contributes to the ongoing racial inequality in America. He encourages Black students to seize the opportunities given them instead of enshrining victimhood. $24 plus $5 s&h from Simon and Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020.

Multiple Intelligences

Identify and apply the best learning strategies for your students in *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom.* This revised edition includes Howard Gardner's original studies in the seven components of the human mind, suggests the existence of two new intelligences, and provides updated information and resources for educational use in the classroom. $22.95 plus $5 s&h from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1703 N. Beauregard St., Alexandria, VA 22311, 800/933-2723.

E-mail for Kids

E-mail can be a fun and useful way for kids to communicate, but it can also pose a safety hazard. *The Kid's Guide to E-Mail* is written specifically for middle-grade students to help them to use E-mail imaginatively, as well as safely. The guide can help kids choose a user name, set up an e-mail address, store messages, play E-mail games with online friends, and identify potentially bad situations, sites, or correspondents. $6.95 plus $5 s&h from NTC/ Contemporary Publishing Group, 4255 West Touhy Avenue, Lincolnwood, IL 60712, 847/679-5500.

Easy Ancient Art

Looking for ways to energize your classroom bulletin boards or entertain your students? Take a peek at *50 Nifty Super More Origami Crafts.* With a few creases and some imagination, students can make flowers, elephants, mobiles, and more using the ancient Japanese art of paper folding. Step-by-step instructions and illustrations guide you and your students through each fun project and give suggestions for decorating the finished product. $6.95 plus $5 s&h from NTC/ Contemporary Publishing Group, 4255 Touhy Avenue, Lincolnwood, IL 60712, 847/679-5500.

Literature Kids Love

A valuable resource to aid teachers in creating a reading list, *Best Books for Young Adults* has been completely revised to offer guidance for directing student readers through the immense world of young adult literature. This resource evaluates trends in publishing, presents book lists by author and year, and gives a brief synopsis of themes. $35 plus $5 s&h from American Library Association, 155 North Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60606. 800/545-2433. http://www/ala.org/editions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

October 5 Is World Teachers' Day

For background on World Teachers' Day, how it is observed worldwide, and information related to it, log on to the Web site of Education International (the international teachers' union of which NEA is a member) at www.ei-ie.org/ei/5october/english/ewtdindex.html.

A Trick or Treat Milestone

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Trick or Treat for UNICEF, which was founded in 1946 just after the conclusion of World War II. The Trick or Treat for UNICEF idea began in 1950 when a group of kids from Philadelphia decorated milk cartons for Halloween and asked people to make contributions to help children victimized by the war. With the $17 they collected, the "Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF" program was born.

Since then, children in the United States have raised more than $105 million, which has been used to provide medicine, clean water, food, vitamins, education, and emergency relief to millions of children in more than 160 countries.

Today more than 2.5 million children trick-or-treat for UNICEF. For more information, visit www.unicefusa.org/trickortreat/index.html.

Hands-on Science

Want to actively involve your sixth, seventhth, and eighth grade students in creative problem solving? The Bayer Corporation has joined with NSF, the Christopher Columbus Foundation, and Discovery Magazine to present the Bayer/NSF Award for Community Service. The award is designed to recognize the use of science and technology to tackle community issues.

This year's winning teams worked to save endangered species, assisted youngsters in science programs, and invented a device to prevent crib-related deaths. In exchange for their innovation, the first-place team received up to $20,000 in U.S. savings bonds and one team won the $25,000 Columbus Community Grant. All finalists received an all-expense-paid trip to Disney World, T-shirts, and a 1-year subscription to Discovery Magazine.

Want to get your kids involved? The deadline for entries for next year's competition is January 31. Information and entry forms are posted online at www.bayernsfaward.com.

Signet Classic

Five high school juniors and seniors have a chance to win $1,000 each with Signet Classic's annual Scholarship Essay Contest. Winners' schools will also receive a Signet Classic library. This year's competition book is Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage.* Submissions are due before April 15, 2001. For more information or for entry forms, call 212-366-2377 or visit www.penguinputnam.com/academic.

Toyota International

Twenty-nine NEA members participated in the annual Toyota International Teacher Program in Tokyo. In addition to visiting public schools and interacting with Japanese families and communities, participants were given the chance to witness a normally off-limits practice session of Japan's champion sumo wrestlers. For information about applying for the 2001 program, call 877/TEACHJP, visit www.iie.org/pgms/toyota, or E-mail toyotateach@iie.org.

Sight Night

Join Give the Gift of Sight this Halloween by participating in Sight Night, a volunteer effort to collect used eyeglasses and sunglasses for distribution to people in developing countries who cannot afford eyeglasses.

Give the Gift of Sight will clean, repair, and deliver eyeglasses to those who can afford neither prescriptions nor eyewear.

Trick-or-treaters across the nation will collect eyeglasses door-to-door on Halloween.

Collection boxes for eyeglass donations will be located at LensCrafters and Lions Clubs International locations.

For more information on this program, call 877/605-4242 or go to www.lenscrafters.com.

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** All other bank APYs in the comparison chart are accurate as of 8/2/00, based on a $2,500 minimum opening deposit and rates may be higher for higher balances. Source – *Informa Research Services*, 8/2/00.

†Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children.

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WEB WINNERS

Antebellum Reform

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony are recognized as two of the most influential and prolific reformers of the antebellum era. Now, you can track the first decade of their collaboration via Travels for Reform, an online collection of historical documents presented as live transcripts of the originals and graphic images. An introductory essay, selected biographical dictionary, and explanatory notes are also available on this easily-navigated and thorough site. To learn more about women's reform, antebellum politics, and the alliance of abolitionists and women's rights advocates, visit http://adh.sc.edu/sa/sa-table.html.

World Weather Education

Want to know if it's sunny in Rio de Janeiro? Raining in

London? Or how about the five-day forecast for your hometown? Find the weather and climate of any place in the world with the meteorological Web site of the UK. This searchable page provides weather news and links to climatologists around the globe. Especially interesting is the education section, replete with weather data, historic events, a curriculum center, and resources. Be sure to check out the infrared globe disk, a continuously updated view from 36,000 kilometers above the earth. Visit www.met-office.gov.uk.

Practical Math

If you're looking for ways to relate math to real-world situations, this Web site can help! Math word problems are arranged by level, from grade five through 12. Each section has a number of problems stated in sentences, encouraging students to relate mathematical concepts to external dilemmas. Hints are offered and answers are available at a click of the mouse button. Great practice for kids and a handy resource for teachers. Visit www.stfx.ca/special/mathproblems/welcome.html.

Britannica Education

Britannica Education recently launched BritannicaSchool.com, an easy-to-use online

resource aimed at helping students organize assignments and conduct research. BritannicaSchool provides colorful study guides on over 200 topics, along with activities, glossaries, and learning assistance. Templates and tutorials are also accessible to students, as are editor-selected links to age-appropriate and relevant Web sites. Currently focused on grade levels nine through 12, BritannicaSchool will include kindergarten and elementary guides by 2001. For a free online tour and registration information, go to www.britannicaschool.com.

Improving the Practice

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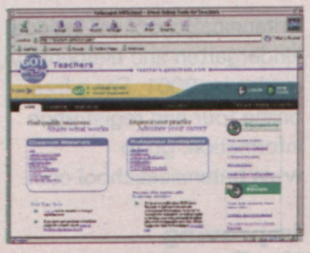


announces a new site for educators to improve their practice, advance their careers, and share resources and ideas. The searchable database provides links to relevant articles and recent news, as well as a discussion forum, a section detailing professional standards, and certification information by state. Visit online at http://teachers.gotschool.com.

Girls' Math

"Boys are better at math" will be heard less often with the help of Color Math Pink's Web site. Designed for

elementary and middle school girls, this Web site is designed to encourage and develop basic math skills. Visitors to this site will find homework tips, sample math problems, helpful links, as well as workshops and other materials for parents and teachers. Visit this site at www.colormathpink.com.

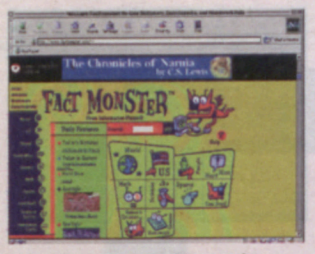
Resources for the Millennium Teacher

Scholastic announces its newest venture: Scholastic.com. This site is

colorful and informative, with sections devoted to kids, parents, and teachers. Pages for educators include lesson plans, online activities, professional resources, research tools, a planning calendar, and more! Curriculum is rich in content and focuses on foundational reading skills. Projects and plans available for grades K-8, prove easy-to-find resources, authors, scientists, and educational experts. Online at www.scholastic.com.

Just theFacts

FactMonster.com is a mega-reference site for young students. Combining a user-friendly format and bright,



informative graphics, it's packed with info on everything from dragons and giants to pets and proverbs. www.factmonster.com.

Tutoring Just Got Easier

Learn something new today with the help of FindTutorials.com, a search service that targets courses and guides on subjects ranging from the arts to fitness to sports. http://www.findtutorials.com/

Sydney Olympics

Whether or not you'll be headed down under for the Olympics, Kodak invites you to take a visually rich online tour of Sydney. Browse through a variety of photographers' galleries, or search for a specific shot. www.kodak.com/US/en/corp/sydneyOlympics/index2.shtml.

More Olympics

Here's a site that tells you just about all there is about the Olympic sports. A user-friendly drop-down menu at nbcolympics.com whisks you there. Along with the day's highlights leading up to Sydney. http://www.nbcolympics.com/

Up in the Air

Interested in a behind the scenes look at air traffic control? Try taking this online tour of the FAA's Air Traffic Control System Command Center, which regulates air traffic, when such things as weather, equipment and runway closures cause problems. http://www.fly.faa.gov/Information/Tour/tour.

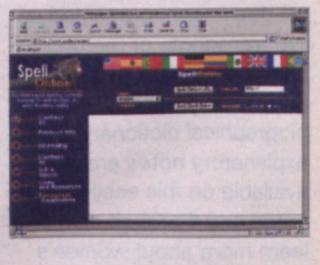
One of a Kind Gets An Upgrade

One of the best just got better. National Geographic

has enhanced its magazine Web site, taking readers beyond the printed page to experience a higher level of interactivity. Includes streaming video and audio interviews, forums and Flashback photo albums. http://www.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/

Spell Checker

Now your students have no more excuses for spelling



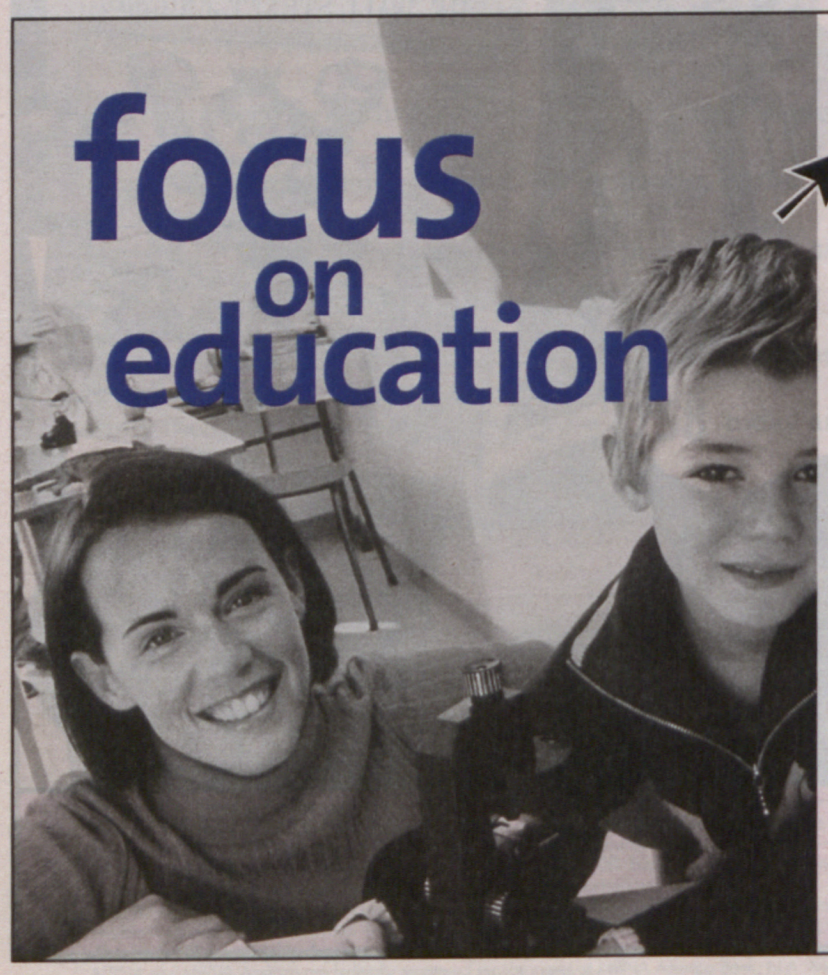
mistakes. A spell checker is just a mouse click away at Spell Online. The free service will even examine your Web site. http://www.spellonline.com/

Sounds like??

How are modern-day sound effects made? Find out at this unusual site. Finds Sounds is a search engine devoted to finding sound effects on the Web. www.findsounds.com/

More Sites

USA Today regularly reviews Web sites and files them in a handy archive. Go to USA Today.com/life/cyber/ch.htm.



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VIDEOS

Raising Cattle

Children 4-12 will get a close up view of ranch life in Field Trip Videos' *Raising Cattle*. They are guided through a day as a Wyoming cattle rancher by Professor Penwick and his sidekick Mr. Wardelmeyer who teach with silly antics as well as valuable lessons. $7.95 plus $5.95 s&h from Bridgestone Multimedia Group, 200 N. Mckemy Avenue, Chandler, AZ 85526. 800/523-0988. FAX: 480/940-8924. On the Web at www.Bridgestone Multimedia.com.

Backstage at The Ballet

Professor Penwick and Mr. Wardelmeyer guide kids through the production of The Nutcracker Ballet in *Backstage at The Ballet*. From costumes to lights and music to dancing, children 4-12 will be enchanted by this edition of the Field Trip Videos. $7.95 plus $5.95 s&h from Bridgestone Multimedia Group, 200 N. Mckemy Avenue, Chandler, AZ 85526. 800/523-0988. FAX: 480/940-8924. On the Web at www.Bridgestone Multimedia.com.

Making Steel

Flying sparks and molten ore are sure to capture the attention of children 4-12 in *Making Steel*. The safest way to explore a steel mill, this part of the Field Trip Videos is sure to awe and educate students about the making of the metals they use each day. $7.95 plus $5.95 s&h from Bridgestone Multimedia Group, 200 N. Mckemy Avenue, Chandler, AZ 85526. 800/523-0988. FAX: 480/940-8924. On the Web at www.Bridgestone Multimedia.com.

DIVERSITY Calendar

October

Diversity Day, October 18
Begun in Flint, Michigan, Diversity Day was designed as a way to promote communication in schools about various groups and interests. A Diversity Day Handbook created by NEA member Cleorah Scruggs is available for $5. To order, send a check to Scruggs at P.O. Box 355, Flint, MI 48507. For information, e-mail Cscruggs1@compuserv.com.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History Month
The month of October was selected to commemorate the anniversaries of the first two lesbian and gay marches on Washington in October 1979 and 1987. Among the special commemorations during October is National Coming Out Day on October 11, which marks the largest gathering to date of gays and lesbians supporting gay rights in Washington, D.C. in 1987.

November

Children's Day—Panama, November 1
Kids take the place of adults on this holiday, meaning the best students take the teachers' places! Give your students a taste of this unique chance to play teacher, and e-mail duberino@hotmail.com for more information.

Culture Day—Japan, November 3
In commemoration of the present Constitution of Japan, Culture Day celebrates peace and freedom. Prior to 1945, Culture Day was a celebration of Emperor Meiji. Introduce your students to more information about Japan's regions, history, schools, economy, and more by visiting www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/index.html.

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A Day at The Farm
Cows, chicken, sheep, and rabbits will greet your students in Field Trip Videos' *A Day at The Farm*. Professor Penwick and Mr. Wardelmeyer take kids through a tour of the farm, pointing out the new animals and explaining the workings of today's farm. $7.95 plus $5.95 s&h from Bridgestone Multimedia Group, 200 N. Mckemy Avenue, Chandler, AZ 85526. 800/523-0988. FAX: 480/940-8924. On the Web at www.Bridgestone Multimedia.com.

More American Heroes
Children's musician Jonathan

Sprout's newest release includes catchy songs about Neil Armstrong, Helen Keller, the Wright brothers, and eight other American heroes. A blend of pop and rock, rhythm and blues, and ballads, these songs are likely to have your students singing, learning, and asking for more. $14.98 CD, $9.98 cassette. Call 1-800-FUN-SONG or visit www.jonsprout.com

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EVENTS/PROJECTS

Next in Space
Space Day 2001 announces the launch of a new series of Design Challenges for students in grades 4, 5, and 6 in preparation for the international celebration of space on May 3, 2001.

From creating a mechanical arm for use during space walks to developing emergency procedures for astronauts, students will create solutions to real challenges encountered in space.

Teachers, students, and other space enthusiasts can find information about the Design Challenges at www.spaceday.com beginning October 2.

GRANTS/AWARDS

NEA Urban Grants
NEA's Urban Grants Program supports local NEA affiliates in the development of education reform leadership programs for K-12 faculty, education support personnel, and higher education school faculty.

Twenty-five grants of $4,000 each are awarded annually to local NEA Urban affiliates with 500 or more active members.

Proposals must reflect some aspect of the current NEA program and contribute to restoring public confidence in public education. Proposals can be organized around the themes of student achievement; school safety; education and social services coordination; quality professional development; public, parental, and business engagement in student learning; and quality teaching and learning. Applications and guidelines are available online at www.nea.org/grants/urban/.

Science and Math
The Toshiba America Foundation, a private grant-making organization dedicated to supporting education programs and activities in the United States, attempts to enhance the quality of science and mathematics education in U.S. communities by investing in projects designed by class-

room teachers to improve science and science-related education.

The foundation's Small Grants Program for K-6 Science and Math Education will award 75 grants of up of $1,000 each for the purpose of encouraging hands-on teaching of science and mathematics.

Projects must be implemented between November 15, 2000, and May 15, 2001. Any K-6 teacher in a public or private school is eligible. Grants will be awarded to the teacher's school and will be restricted for use by the teacher in his or her classroom. Only one application per teacher allowed.

For application guidelines and for information on Toshiba's other funding programs, see the foundation's Web site at www.toshiba.com/bout/taf/smallgrants.html or call 212/588-0820.

All about Math

The Mathematics Education Trust (MET) was established by the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) to fund special projects that enhance the teaching and learning of mathematics.

Applications are currently being accepted for a variety of award programs for educators.

Contact: NCTM's MET Infocentral Department at www.nctm.org/about/grants.htm.

About Character

The Character Education Partnership (CEP) will recognize approximately ten schools and school districts (K-12) in the United States as models of effective character education.

Award winners receive national recognition through press coverage and at the CEP National Forum in Denver, Colorado on October 18-20, 2001.

Award-winning schools and districts also will be featured in a nationally distributed book and on the CEP Web site. Winners receive a national Schools of Character flag for display and a $2,000 award.

Further information on the program is available at the Character Education Partnership Web site at www.character.org/schools/ index.cgi or call 800/988-8081.

Math Innovations

Toyota's Investment in Mathematics Excellence (TIME) is a partnership between Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc., and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics through its Mathematics Education Trust (MET).

Toyota TIME grants are available to K-12 teachers of mathematics for innovative projects that enhance mathematics education within a school.

Public and private school teachers of mathematics in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories may apply. The focus is on individual students and classrooms rather than on district-wide projects.

Up to 35 two-year grants, totaling up to $350,000, will be awarded. Grants will be awarded at three levels: elementary, middle, and high school. In addition, project directors will be invited to an expense-paid, three-day seminar in the summer following the first year of the project.

Proposal forms and additional program information about the grants are available online www.nctm.org/about/toyota/brochure.htm. E-mail: toyotatime@nctm.org or call 1/888-573-TIME.

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in the Light Lane

Definitely Food for Thought

As I talked with a fourth grader about his lack of appetite at noon, I asked him what he thought of the school food served for lunch.

"Oh, the cafeteria food's OK," he replied. "But it's not as good as the real thing."

Deb Morse
LaCrosse, Wisconsin

One day in my ninth grade physical science class, I was discussing how the mass of two objects and distance between them affect the amount of gravitational pull between them.

I used the example of pencils and the students' hands.

"The pencil and your hand have relatively small masses so the pencil is *not* attracted to your hand.

"But the relationship between the pencil and the earth is different," I continued. "Due to earth's large mass the pencil *is* drawn to the earth when you drop it."

Little did I know this comparison made complete sense to the students.

I stepped into the hall for a moment to talk with another instructor, and upon my return into the class several pencils came whirling at me!

Apparently, my clever students had been able to figure out the concept of gravitational pull and mass relationship!

I asked my students if they were perhaps trying to tell me something about my own mass.

Jennifer Sweeney
Cedar Falls, Iowa

One of my seventh grade students came to me excited with news.

"We're going to see an abandoned sink!" she exclaimed.

Having taken quite a few direct hits from hurricanes over the past several years, I nodded in approval.

"With all these storms we've had," I said, "I've seen a few abandoned sinks myself."

The student smiled.

"No, no, Mr. Morris," she said. "We've bought tickets to see the band N Sync."

Randy Morris
Wilmington, North Carolina

Having completed the unit on the Medieval period in world history, I gave my class the following question as part of the test for the unit. "Identify two things a Knight had to do as a member of King Arthur's Round Table."

Answered one student:

"(1) A Knight had to attend all meetings of the Round Table.

"(2) He had to be on time!"

Patricia Tarashuk
East Orange, New Jersey

As I was sitting in the back of the classroom listening to the intern teacher talking with our students about faults and earthquakes, I became anxious.

We live in Salt Lake City at the base of the Wasatch Mountains, directly on top of the Wasatch Fault. The intern was doing a great job of explaining the concepts, but had yet to make the obvious connection to our local environment.

Finally, I could stand it no longer.

"Boys and girls, we live right on top of a fault," I said. "Does anyone know the name of that fault?"

A student quickly answered: "Asphalt?"

Pat Rusk
Salt Lake City, Utah

As a seventh grade teacher, I occasionally call a parent about a child's academic progress (or lack thereof). After one phone call, I knew that I had made an impression when the student came up to me the next day full of spunk.

"Mr. Lux," she said, "I want your mother's phone number so I can call her and ruin your life, too."

I was somewhat taken aback, but this student became one of my more hard-working pupils.

Brian Lux
Front Royal, Virginia

After being transferred from a middle school resource center to the central office, some of my former students wrote me letters. One of the seventh graders wrote: "I have some good news and I have some bad news. The good news is that I was put in a harder math book. The bad news is that I can't do it!"

From another letter from a seventh grader: "I am trying really hard to be good, but I haven't been able to succeed yet!"

Nancy Kurbyweit
Irvington, New Jersey

Recently, I was discussing the topic of Mother's Day with my first and second graders. One of my students eagerly raised his hand to share his ideas about this special holiday.

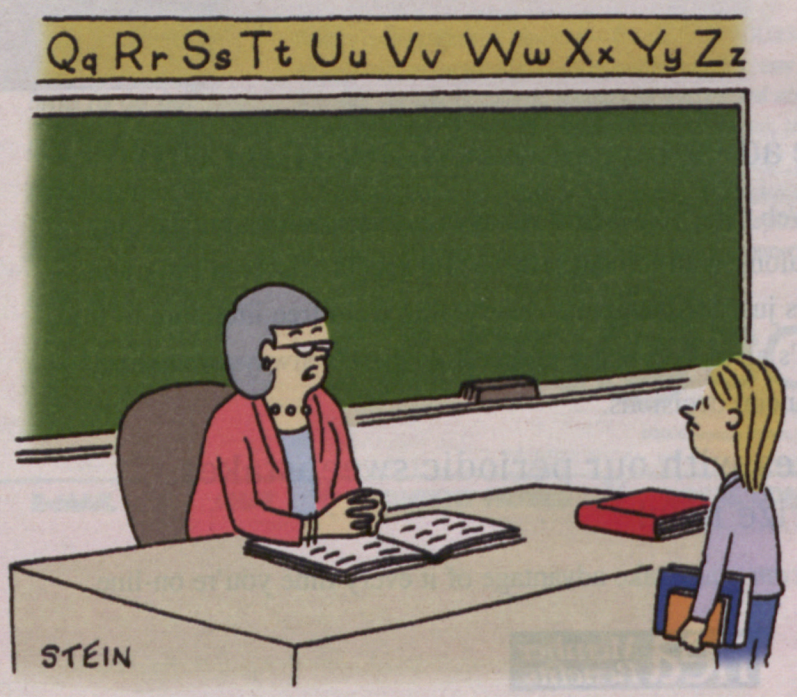
"Mrs. Alverson, I planted an iris for my mommy for Mother's Day. They're pretty. You know I'm iris. Well, only half iris."

Cheryl Alverson
Egg Harbor, New Jersey

I bought some CDs to play during work time. They came in a pack of three, and the last one was an opera. I told the class that I didn't care for the opera.

The students wanted to listen to the CD anyway, so I played it. One day, after hearing the CD again, I noted that I was beginning to like the opera. One little boy looked at me and said, "That's because you are listening to it with children you love." Priceless!

Carla Plager
Auburn, Nebraska



"Please go on with your excuse for being late, and try to ignore my facial expressions."

Sounds Like Math

One of my second grade students was reading aloud to me and read the word "tradition."

"Do you know what tradition is?" I asked.

She thought for a moment.

"Well, no," she said. "But I know what subtraction is."

Kathy Dodge
Essex, Vermont

Friday mornings, the special ed teacher and I meet to design a daily math lesson centered around the morning newspaper.

Each member of our ninth grade pre-algebra inclusion class has a newspaper. With articles on military budgets and lottery winners, this particular paper provided an excellent opportunity to investigate "large numbers."

One day, a student was creating a budget using the fictitious lottery winnings from the newspaper: "I would give millions to my mother and to my church and keep the rest for me."

I realized that next week would be a good time to focus on "small numbers."

Anthony Wayne Sapp
Swannanoa, North Carolina

While teaching a math lesson, I asked, "How many right angles does a rectangle have?"

My student answered, "Two."

"Show me your two right angles," I said. "What do you call the others?"

"Those are my left angles."

Cheryl Weaver
Lakewood, Ohio

Got Laughs?

● Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Fax: 202/822-7206. Send E-mail to neatoday@nea.org.

● Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your E-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the new "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an E-mail to join-lightlane@list.nea.org (no subject or message needed).

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Travel Benefits	NEA Travel Rewards All Major Airlines	AMEX Delta SkyMiles® Delta Airlines	Citibank AAdvantage® American Airlines	Bank of America Dividend Miles® U.S. Airways
* Free round-trip ticket in the 48 contiguous United States	**15,000** points	25,000 points	25,000 points	20,000 – 25,000 points (changes seasonally)
Free round-trip ticket to Europe	**35,000** points	50,000 points	40,000 – 60,000 points (changes seasonally)	40,000 – 50,000 points (changes seasonally)
Blackout dates	None	Major Holidays	Major Holidays	Major Holidays

For the NEA Travel Rewards Program, the corresponding maximum dollar value ("MDV") for a ticket for the award levels shown above are: 15,000 pts/$500; 35,000 pts/$1,000. For travel within a single U.S. zone, the award level and corresponding maximum dollar value is 10,000 pts/$300; for travel within North America and Mexico: 25,000 pts/$600. There may be up to two connections per flight. Information shown in chart is accurate as of 6/00, based on an independently conducted telephone survey.

†The annual fee for the NEA Travel Rewards Credit Card is $30. The Annual Percentage Rates (APRs) for purchases and ATM and Bank cash advances are 15.99% for the NEA Travel Rewards *Platinum Plus*℠ card or 16.99% for the Travel Rewards Gold or School Days cards. The current promotional APR offer for cash advance checks and balance transfers made with any of the accounts is 2.9% through your first four statement closing dates commencing the month after your account is opened. Thereafter, the APR that will be applied to new and outstanding cash advance balances (consisting of cash advance check and balance transfer transactions) will be 15.99% for the NEA Travel Rewards *Platinum Plus* account or 16.99% for the Travel Rewards Gold or School Days account. Transaction fee for Bank and ATM cash advances: 2% of each cash advance ($2 minimum, $10 maximum). Transaction fee for credit card cash advance checks and balance transfers: 1% of each cash advance ($2 minimum, $10 maximum). Transaction fee for the purchase of wire transfers, money orders, bets, lottery tickets, and casino gaming chips: 2% of each such purchase ($2 minimum, $10 maximum). **MBNA will allocate your payments to balances (including new transactions) with lower APRs before balances with higher APRs. Cash advances and balance transfers may not be used to pay off or pay down any MBNA account. Cash advances obtained through a Bank or ATM transaction are not eligible for the promotional 2.9% APR offer.**

A "fixed" Annual Percentage Rate (APR) means that the APR will not vary in accordance with changes in a formula, such as the U.S. Prime Rate. MBNA reserves the right to change the APR, in accordance with the Credit Card Agreement and the laws of the state of Delaware and the Federal Truth in Lending Act. The NEA is not involved in the credit decision process: standard credit procedure is followed. All applications will be subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America.

Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program.

§Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children.

The NEA Credit Card Program® has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew membership, that person and their family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates, fees and special promotions (including Travel Rewards) offered through the NEA Credit Card Program. If eligible, a replacement card will be offered. This credit card program is issued and administered by MBNA America Bank, N.A.

***NEA Travel Rewards Highlights of Terms and Conditions:** This is a brief description of the NEA Travel Rewards Program; complete details accompany the credit card.

Air travel rewards: a scheduled round-trip Economy class ticket within or between two zones of the lower 48 states (Zone 1 – locations within the Eastern and Central time zones; Zone 2 – locations within the Mountain and Pacific time zones); to Alaska, Hawaii or select international destinations.

MDV includes taxes and destination fees. Tickets will be the lowest available published fare at the time of booking. Actual date and time of travel are subject to availability. All reservations and ticketing must be completed at least 21 days before travel date. All travel must include a Saturday night stay. For international travel, your stay must be at least seven days but no more than 30 days. Other restrictions apply.

Automobile rental rewards: midsize vehicles with pickup and return to the same rental location anywhere within the United States. Advance reservations of at least seven days are required and are subject to availability. You must meet all credit, age, and driver requirements in effect at the time and place of rental. 2,000 *Points* are needed for each single day rental (MDV: $60, including tax); 1,000 *Points* for a single weekend day rental (MDV: $35, including tax) and 9,000 *Points* for a seven-day rental period (MDV: $300, including tax). Optional charges are your responsibility. Other conditions apply.

Hotel accommodation rewards: valid at participating properties in the United States. Advance reservations of at least seven days are required and are subject to availability. There is no minimum stay requirement. Rewards are valid for a standard single- or double-occupancy room with a nightly rate, including tax. Personal, optional and incidental expenses are your responsibility. Current reward levels: a nightly room rate up to $110: 3,000 *Points*; up to $200: 5000 *Points*.

You may accrue an annual maximum of 70,000 *Points*. *Points* will expire five years from the end of the year in which they are earned. *Points* have no cash value. *Points* may be earned and redeemed only if your account is in good standing. **Earn one *Point* for every dollar in Net Purchases charged to the account. "Net Purchase" means the purchase of goods or services by you and your authorized user(s) made with the NEA *Travel Rewards* credit card, less credits and plus or minus any adjustments. Fractions of dollar values of Net Purchases will be rounded to the nearest whole dollar. Additional terms apply.**

Points may not be combined with any other discounts, special rates, promotions, or other rewards programs offered by MBNA or any other entity, including airline frequent flyer programs or airline credit card programs.

MBNA reserves the right to change any or all of the terms, benefits, or conditions of participation in this program.

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The terms of this program are subject to government approval and are void where prohibited by law.

The information contained in this advertisement is accurate as of 7/00. The information may have changed after that date. To find out what may have changed, you may contact MBNA America Bank, N.A., the exclusive issuer and administrator of the *Platinum Plus* Credit Card Program, by calling 1-888-758-7946. TTY users, please call 1-800-833-6262.

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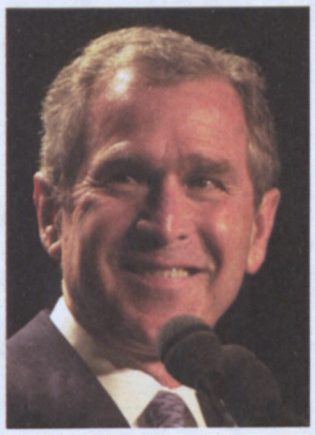
How Do the Presidential Candidates Measure Up For Children and Public Education?

Comparing the Candidates On the Issues

Vice President Al Gore

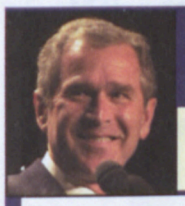


Governor George W. Bush

Al Gore		George W. Bush
Al Gore opposes any proposal that would funnel public tax dollars into private school tuition. Al Gore on the record: "I will not go along with any plan that would drain taxpayer money away from our public schools and give it to private schools in the form of vouchers." *(Democratic Convention acceptance speech, August 17, 2000)*	**Vouchers**	George Bush supports spending public tax dollars for private school tuition. His education plan would give vouchers worth about $1,500 to students in schools that remain on a state's "failing" list for three years. George Bush on the record: "We've got to figure out how to encourage the spread of vouchers so as to improve public schools and to convince people it will improve public schools." *(Washington Post, April 25, 1999)*
Al Gore supports completing the effort of hiring 100,000 qualified teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. Al Gore on the record: "Smaller classes enable teachers to provide more individualized attention to every child, and make it easier for teachers to focus on teaching – rather than on the challenge of maintaining discipline in a larger class – and students to focus on learning." *(Reply to NEA 2000 Presidential candidate questionnaire)*	**Class Size**	George Bush opposes federal initiatives to help schools reduce class size. George Bush on the record: "With me, the guiding principle will be 'the proof is in the pudding.' It isn't a matter of more classrooms and more teachers, it's a matter of making the ones we have work." *(Bergen (N.J.) Record, March 30, 2000)*
Gore supports federal aid for helping communities rebuild and modernize school buildings. He would finish wiring every classroom to the Internet. Al Gore on the record: "Why in the world won't the Congress ... give local communities help in modernizing the facilities. I've been to schools where the facilities are so overcrowded they have to feed lunch in shifts, with first shift in some cases starting at 9:30 in the morning. I've been to schools where the desks have to be rearranged to avoid the ceiling tiles falling on the heads of the students." *(Address to NAACP, July 12, 2000)*	**School Modernization**	The Bush six-point education reform plan is silent on school modernization. George Bush on the record: "I don't believe the federal government should be building classrooms across the country." *(Bergen (N.J.) Record, March 30, 2000)*
The Gore education plan increases education funding by $115 billion.	**Overall Federal Funding Support for Education**	The Bush education plan increases education funding by $14 billion.

Comparing Rhetoric and Reality

The George W. Bush claim to be *the* education candidate in the 2000 Presidential race rests on his record as governor of Texas. What is that record? This chart compares Bush's statements about education in Texas with a more independent appraisal.



A Closer Look at the Bush Education Record

Rhetoric	vs.	Reality
"We are already leading the nation in improving our schools... During the past four years, TAAS test scores have increased across the board, for every ethnic group, in every subject, at every grade level tested." *(Bush's Texas State of the State Speech, January 27, 1999)*	**Texas Education Miracle**	In 1999, Texas ranked 42nd out of 50 states in average SAT scores, and only 10 states had lower composite ACT scores. *(College Board, August 31, 1999, ACT, August 17, 1999)*
"I support smaller classes and believe the most effective use of state and local funds is to reduce class sizes in the early grades." *(Austin American Statesman, October 25, 1998)*	**Class Size Reduction**	During his tenure as Governor, Bush advocated the repeal of class size limits already in place. *(Houston Chronicle, October 11, 1999)* "By 1998, teaching assignments with over 40 students per classroom and over 200 students per week were not uncommon in Texas." *(Dallas Morning News, October 11, 1998)*
"In my first biennium as Governor, we appropriated a $160 million one-time construction grant for fast-growing, low-property wealth districts. In the last legislative session, we appropriated $200 million, that is a permanent part of the budget to help fast-growing districts, to subsidize interest payments for bonds for school construction programs." *(Bush Speech, September 28, 1998)*	**School Modernization**	Texas ranks 2nd in the nation in the unmet funding need for education technology ($4.1 billion), and 5th in the overall unmet need for school modernization ($13.6 billion). *(National Education Association, April 3, 2000)*
"I don't think you can pay a good teacher enough." *(Dallas Morning News, December 17, 1999)*	**Teacher Salaries**	"Bush campaign literature cites his support of Texas teachers and points out that under the governor's leadership, the average teacher salary in the state increased by more than $8,000. In truth, teacher leaders and some Democratic lawmakers say [Bush] had little input on those raises other than signing the legislation." *(Dallas Morning News, April 20, 2000)*
"Teachers are not the object of education reform, they are the engine of education reform. They have a high calling, and we must respect it." *(Washington Post, March 31, 2000)*	**Support for Teachers**	Bush successfully pushed to remove all teacher rights — including minimum salary, tenure and due process protections — as well as class size and other requirements, from the final version of the bill. *(Dallas Morning News, October 16, 1994 and March 21, 1995)* Despite his 1994 campaign promise to "oppose any effort to reduce contributions to the Teacher Retirement System," Bush cut $400 million in 1995. *(Corpus Christi Caller-Times, March 18, 1997)*
"I can't think of a better way of affirming access to the universities and the Texas dream than by insisting that every single child in the state of Texas has a chance to realize their full potential." *(Bush Speech, September 28, 1998)*	**Higher Education**	"Higher education is not my priority," Bush said. *(San Antonio Express-News, March 22, 1998)* In 1999, Texas ranked 48th in the nation in the percentage of high school students who enrolled and graduated from college. *(Ft. Worth Star-Telegram, June 2, 1999)*

Al Gore measures up for children and public education

"I'm committed to helping all students learn, and I know that technology can help. Al Gore has been a real leader in helping schools get up to speed with technology. Through his work on the E-Rate, he's helped hundreds of thousands of students like mine connect to the Internet. Al Gore is also committed to smaller class sizes, and, as educators, we know how important small classes are. But it's not easy to keep classes small when enrollments are climbing. Here in Michigan, enrollment is up 7 percent this year. That's why this is such a pivotal time. We can count on Al Gore to work for more federal funds to hire more teachers and build safe and modern classrooms. As Vice President, he's already started down that road. This election will determine the direction this nation will take on educating students. Al Gore is moving in the right direction."

Photo by Charlie Cortez

Jennifer Pearce Foor
High school social studies teacher,
Romeo High School in Macomb County, Michigan, 27th year teaching

Photo by Chris Seward

"My school has 1,000 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. It was built 50 years ago and is so overcrowded that we've had to use the main school and 14 mobile units to fit everyone in. The economy's good around here, but that means more people are moving in and that's causing enrollment to grow. I saw a figure where North Carolina's high school enrollment will jump 20 percent over the next decade. We're just busting at the seams. There's a chance we can raise more money to modernize our schools by passing a local tax issue, and the state may chip in some. But we need federal support if we're going to have a seat for every child. That's why I support Vice President Gore. He's helped get more money to build new schools. We need federal help to keep up."

Paula Trantham
Fifth grade math/science teacher
Apex Elementary in Wake County, North Carolina, sixth year teaching

"I heard Vice President Gore speak nine years ago, so I know he's been pro-public education for a long time, not just now when he's running for President. We don't just need more teachers in my school district. We need well-trained teachers, and I think Al Gore can help. Thanks to his efforts to help school districts afford to hire new teachers, we've been able to reduce class sizes in the primary grades, where it really makes a difference. I believe these efforts will continue in a Gore Administration. I also like his stand opposing vouchers. There's no way I can support voucher programs that would take funds away from schools operating on shoestring budgets. These schools are safe havens for many kids, places where they get breakfast and lunch. We can't let funds for these kids be diverted through vouchers for private schools."

Photo by Matt Ferguson

Renee Cruikshank-Ward
Mentor teacher, Harvey Public School District 152, Harvey, Illinois
Twenty-one years teaching eighth grade music and third grade

Al Gore: Proven Leadership for Children and Public Education

Vote Tuesday, November 7.

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